

**Aquaculture Advisory Council**  
**April 26, 2024**  
**NJDA Office, Trenton; Teams Hybrid**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Sec. Edward Wengryn, Mr. Russ Babb (Comm. Shawn LaTourette), Mr. Joe Forte (Sec. Tahesha Way) [virtual], Mr. Loel Muetter (Comm. Kaitlan Baston), Dr. Michael Acquafredda (Dr. Dave Bushek), Dr. Douglas Zemeckis, Mr. Sean Towers (Dr. Laura Lawson), Ms. Lisa Calvo, Mr. Matt Gregg, Mr. Steve Fleetwood (Mr. Frank Virgilio) [virtual], Dr. Amanda Wenczel Arians

**Members Absent:** Mr. Barney Hollinger, Mr. Bob Rush (Mr. Richard Herb)

**Public in Attendance:** Virginia Wheatley (DOH), Megan Swain (DEP), Alison Stout (USDA-VS), Elisha Wall (USDA- VS), Ned Gaine, Ashely Kerr. Public on teams/virtual: Bill Avery, Dale Parsons, Elizabeth DeCicco (DEP), Matt Williams, Sarah Gentile (DEP), Kip LeWarn (DEP), Matthew Matusky, Sam Ratcliff, Alissa Wilson (DEP)

Sec. Wengryn called the meeting to order. Quorum Present.

Approval of the January 26, 2024 meeting minutes- Motion by Matt Gregg, second by Lisa Calvo. All in favor, so moved.

***Public Comment***

Ned Gaine- Thank you and welcome Mr. Secretary to the AAC. I appreciate that you came to some of the County Board of Ag meetings. The words you said there resounded with me, it sounded like you are here to help. We are well past the halfway point of the current Aquaculture Development Plan and looking towards the future, I am hoping that your administration will be the first to have the ADP out on time. Last meeting, I talked about how we need a vision in this new plan, and I think you can help with that. We are operating off an Aquaculture Act that predates most of us in the room, and we can create a new vision for aquaculture looks like in this new and current times.

***New Business***

**USDA-FSA Presentation- Aly Dyson & Ash Dunlevy**

Bob Andrzejczak, Executive Director for the New Jersey Farm Service Agency, began with an introduction. I worked with some of you in the past in a different role as a state legislator. I served in the first district as a State Assemblyman and then later as a Senator. In my tenure I worked with the aquaculture industry quite a bit as the Chairman of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Assembly Committee. I think the aquaculture industry has a ton of potential and I want to continue to work with all of you to bring the industry back to what it once was. I want to build off what we started then and work in a different capacity. Today we're going to cover some of our programs that I think can really help the industry continue to grow and thrive. We want to partner with you and continue to build a really strong foundation and relationship moving forward.

Aly Dyson- The Farm Service Agency (FSA) is a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and we provide programs and loans to help farmers, ranchers, and partner organizations

provide food, fuel, and fiber to millions of people worldwide. When we say producers, that includes aquaculture producers. We provide assistance to producers, such as helping with recovery from a natural disaster, preventative programs to help protect commodities from disasters, and through loan programs to make sure producers can recover and run their operations more efficiently. If an aquaculture producer is interested in participating, the best option is to contact the local FSA office. When you schedule an appointment, you come to the office with your business information, or your Social Security number if you operate as an individual, your parcel or lease information and then we go through some eligibility paperwork.

Some of the biggest issues are acreage reporting for aquaculture. You don't have acreage reporting the same as say corn, but you need to have that in by September 30<sup>th</sup> of the year prior to coverage- September 30, 2024 for 2025 coverage year.

The programs reviewed include ELAP- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish; NAP- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program; and Farm Storage Facility Loans. Contact FSA office for more details on these programs, deadlines, coverage levels, costs.

Ash Dunleavy (USDA, FSA)- Discussing general farm loans, with different requirements from the farm storage facility loan. The direct loans included: Farm Ownership Loan- purchase property or any capital improvements; Operating Loans- purchases of livestock, feed, seed, equipment, supplies; Microloans- any loan \$50,000 or under (microloans have a quicker application process but same/similar interest rates); and Emergency Loans- declared disaster and pay for what is necessary in face of emergency. There are also guaranteed loans, which are offered through commercial lenders (versus the direct loans which are through the USDA, FSA). The USDA guarantees the loans through the commercial lenders.

The USDA just released a new online Loan Assistance Program Tool. It can help you figure out what is the best loan option for your needs. We also just released an online loan application. This is only for individuals at this time, but it is really helpful to apply and pay fees all online.

M. Gregg- The NAP program, are bottom planted oysters covered? A. Dyson- Without predator protections that is what I was referring to earlier with the NOAA named storms are the only disasters where they would qualify because they are not in a container. And this is only for planted oysters, not natural populations.

L. Calvo- Could you speak to the current NAP average market price and mortality rates? A. Dyson- I don't have that memorized but I know it has not changed from last year. L. Calvo- That is set by the State though, not grower reference? A. Dyson- It is not based on grower records; it is currently set by the New Jersey State Committee. Growers may have received an email from me asking if the prices we set are reasonable because we do not have aquaculture expertise and we try to reach out to experts & growers to make sure the pricing makes sense.

L. Calvo- Does socially disadvantaged farmers include women? A. Dyson- Yes. For a business to qualify a woman would need to have a 50% or more share of the company.

M. Acquafredda- For ELAP, farmers don't need to apply but they still need to get their acreage report in, is that correct? A. Dyson- That is correct. Late acreage reporting is difficult and frustrating for both office staff and producers. Sometimes late reporting has producers missing out on programs, and none of us want that to happen. M. Acquafredda- Can you clarify under the NAP program what is excessive moisture? For mollusks that would be more of a rain event, where the freshwater depresses salinity and that would qualify? A. Dyson- It depends. It would depend on the event and if you can prove that the disaster caused the loss. We would need documentation of salinity levels in your area and some basic research showing that the crop could not survive in lower salinity. If you can provide that, then yes, it would qualify. D. Zemeckis- I know my office and others at Rutgers are contacted for buoy data for temperature or salinity that can be useful in those cases.

D. Zemeckis- How do you define beginning farmer? A. Dyson- They have been farming for 10 years or less. B. Andrzejczak- There is a caveat that beginning farmer has to have less than 10 years farming, but also has to have 3 years of experience. That is not three years as a business owner, but three years working in the industry.

Questions on the new pilot crop insurance, but that is through USDA RMA and the staff present are with FSA- a different section of the USDA.

M. Gregg- For ELAP is there a revenue limit that disqualifies them? A. Dyson- I don't remember if they are subject to AGI or not, but that is \$900,000. For 2024 you would use the previous three crop years and average those to see if AGI is \$900,000 or not. That is for NAP, and I believe ELAP also has AGI, but I will need to get back to you. A. Dunleavy- That is Adjusted Gross Income, and that is the metric that is used to determine eligibility. M. Gregg- Did NAP change recently? I thought it was with a loss you would receive money to buy more seed. A. Dyson- Crop insurance covers everything. NAP, the way the government wrote it, is to pay enough for you to continue farming. It is not going to make you whole, that is not the point of the program.

#### USDA-NRCS Presentation- Kristin Adams, Aquaculture Specialist

NRCS is the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the environmental side of USDA. We work with private landowners to offer technical and financial assistance to address a natural resource concerns. We are not regulatory. Two main programs: EQIP- Environmental Quality Incentives Program; and RCPP- Regional Conservation Partnership Program. EQIP options include reef restoration, biofouling control, and newly added for land-based, fish raceways and tanks. Also trying to see about streambank restoration for areas in estuaries where bulkheads are failing. RCPP COASTAL project starting this year for reef restoration available to growers on the Atlantic Coast. Kristin covered numerous details on the COASTAL Project- for additional details on these programs, contact Kristin.

L. Calvo- Are you still allowing the transition to floating gear as one of the eligible practices for biofouling? [inaudible, yes] Can you do this for a partial amount of gear or whole farm? K. Adams- It depends on what you currently have in bottom culture and your stocking rates. Yes, it can be partial but there will be a set number of oysters that are eligible for the program based on what is currently in bottom culture.

D. Zemeckis- On the biofouling side of things, I'm trying to figure out what the environmental quality improvements are. Is the idea that it will help with low oxygen? K. Adams- Addressing water quality by limiting nutrient loading. By bringing bags to land, the participants power wash on dry land and get the potential nutrients from fouling organisms out of the bay.

M. Acquafredda- So the EQIP is 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an acre? K. Adams- Minimum of 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an acre. M. Acquafredda- Is the farmer compensated each year for the reef existing? K. Adams- No, compensation is for the placement of the shell. For that one we get the shell delivery receipts, or if you have a shell pile, you go out and measure the volume of shell, larvae receipts, and then we have photos of us going out with the growers when they place them. M. Acquafredda- Is there monitoring? K. Adams- No, which is why the COASTAL Project is so exciting because we will get data on the restoration impacts.

#### Future AAC Composition- Matt Gregg

The Legislative Committee met a couple of weeks ago and discussed restructuring the composition of this Council. The proposed composition would add seats to the Council, including:

- Add DEP seats. One thing we discussed is that there is only one DEP seat and the person sitting there may not have the knowledge to answer the questions in the meeting.
- We added a State Board of Ag seat.
- We changed one of the Rutgers seats to be a member of an academic institution.
- We changed the industry seats to be a little more general, two clam farm seats, two oyster farm seats, and hatchery or nursery seat.

The Committee had three items we could not decide, listed at the bottom of the page. One thing we brought up was should we have some type of legal counsel. I don't know if that is just having them at the meeting or on the Council? The second item is from George Mathis, he recommended having both Shellfish Councils given an appointment- not necessarily a seat but the ability to appoint. Finally, we discussed if the FDA should have a seat.

Sec. Wengryn- For the Shellfish Councils, two Councils and two appointees? How would they be different from clam farmer or oyster farmer? A. Wenczel Arians- I think George was saying that the seats would be the farmer seats, but the appointment/appointing authority would be directly from the Shellfish Council as opposed to the Assembly, Senate, or Governor. D. Zemeckis- That seems reasonable to me, but I remember in the last meeting that Joe Atchison said that those with appointing authority are unlikely to want to give up that authority. Sec. Wengryn- I was thinking along those lines and wondering if this is looking to add two seats. It is still an act of the Legislature.

L. Muetter- The proposed DOH and DEP seats are very specific areas of the Department and not Commissioners. We are taking the discretion from the Commissioner to allow them to designate members. Sec. Wengryn- Which can also be problematic. The current legislation says the Commissioner, but if you are pointing out these specific people from DEP that is a change in statute. R. Babb- Was there discussion from the Committee to reach out to the agencies to see what their thoughts are on this change? As was said at intro, I cannot speak for DLRP, but since they are a permitting group, they may need to recuse themselves from many of the policy discussions

or decisions. Would the three DEP seats for one vote each or one for DEP? M. Gregg- Each seat would get a vote.

D. Zemeckis- Looks to be a great representation of what has been thrown around in discussions in the last months to year. Can you provide more details on the Committee decision to cut the Marine Fisheries Council seat? M. Gregg- As long as I have been here, there has been inactivity from that Council. It's nice to have more industry seats and all have a vote.

Sec. Wengryn- Would there be two additional industry seats based upon the Shellfish Council appointment recommendation or are they coming from those already listed? M. Gregg- I included that because it was a point of discussion by the Committee, but I am ok with striking that item. It was not unanimously favored to have the Shellfish Council with appointing authority, but the Committee wanted the Council to have the final decision on the idea.

M. Acquafredda- I'm noticing it is all bivalve industry members. Right now, that is the majority of the industry but that may not be the case in the future. One thought is that maybe we should keep some of the industry seats broad enough to include other sectors of aquaculture. M. Gregg- We discussed this, and the thought was that there are still two public seats those representatives could fill, should another sector take off in New Jersey. M. Acquafredda- Also, was there conversation about this body appointing acting members until vacancies are filled? M. Gregg- We discussed this and what has been brought up before, is that we don't think the Legislature would be willing to yield power and let the Council make its own appointments, so we stayed away from that idea.

D. Zemeckis- In the January document on Council composition, not this one you sent out, there was a comment on the Business Action Center seat and if EDA may be a better agency. Were there discussions on that item? A. Wenczel Arians- We did discuss that topic and chose to keep the BAC for now. We have not had a full discussion on BAC vs EDA.

L. Calvo- There was also a lot of interest from the Committee to reduce the Rutgers University seats on the Council. Those seats would be filled by NJ Sea Grant and a generic academia seat. I want to raise a point to this Council that I have really valued the various Rutgers University representatives participating in this Council. They bring different areas of expertise with extension and research. Also, I'm not sure that it is a great idea to remove those seats. M. Gregg- I think we spoke the most about this topic and appreciate the efforts from Rutgers staff that have attended. I think the sentiment is to get more people involved here that are already involved in aquaculture. We also speak about workforce development, and it would be great to get some vocational schools involved. D. Zemeckis- Of the two new academia seats, the NJ Sea Grant seat could be anyone Sea Grant appoints, from any of the consortium universities. That could even be Mike [Acquafredda]. For the other seat, how do you see that being appointed- by the Council, NJDA, Governor? M. Gregg- This Council.

M. Acquafredda- I like the addition of vocational schools. I've been working with Cape May Tech and see the benefit here. I also am in favor of keeping two Rutgers seats, but I still think what you have presented here is good.

D, Zemeckis asked about terms for appointees, but could not hear if there was a response.

Sec. Wengryn- Since I have not been involved in this discussion, I would like to take this and review internally, and with my Counsel- especially about your question on legal counsel. You are not regulatory, but you sometimes get regulatory questions. I also want to review the current legislation and see what changes are being proposed. Making sure you are ok with tabling for now. M. Gregg- That's ok because we're not even sure what the next step would be for this topic. L. Calvo commended the Committee on their effort to get to a consensus and provide the document before the Council. Good industry participation as well. Sec. Wengryn- I understand, and I do not intend to undo that effort. M. Gregg- Adding to what Lisa said, the Committee worked to reach a consensus and sees this as being the best option for moving the industry forward.

Dan Chulak from Congressman Pallone's Office- Providing introduction and at the meeting to start information exchange. The Farm Bill is set to expire in September, and the Congressman's office has been working with partners in New Jersey and federal partners to include aquaculture. Last year the Congressman introduced the SEAS Act: Supporting Equity for Aquaculture and Seafood. That was to establish parity between food production from aquaculture and traditional land-based farming within the USDA. From our perspective, most USDA funding is highly focused on commodity crops, which we are not opposed to, but we feel like aquaculture and seafood has fallen behind. We noticed that most seafood we consume here is from overseas; our trade deficit with seafood continues to grow. We are looking to support and bolster domestic seafood supplies. Our bill directs the USDA to consider things equally and redirect funding to aquaculture. This would support the regional aquaculture centers, research to get a better understanding of environmental parameters and their impacts and looks to reform crop insurance to provide more opportunities for seafood and aquaculture. If anyone has ideas or wants to discuss further, contact Mr. Chulak.

Matt Williams- If you're planning on tabling the composition changes [to the AAC] and you want to look into this further, can we at least make notes of the actual things we want to look into? This can give us a path forward for the next meeting. Sec. Wengryn- One is the question about legal counsel at the bottom. Two, is the shift from the Commission of DEP to the specific groups and I want to understand that a little better. We did have the question back and forth between Business Action Center and EDA and I want to explore that more. I want to understand more about how this was developed and how the seats will get elected. For the vocational schools, do we want to list specific schools, and are we going into workforce development and education. M. Williams- Who are we looking to, to answer those questions? Sec. Wengryn- Some is my legal staff, some is conversation with the other Commissioners, and then some will be from the members of the Committee. I understand what was presented, but if I am to go to the Governor's office to request a legislative change, I need to have some background on why the changes as well.

Kip LeWarn, DEP, Division of Land Resources Protection- Looking for clarification on what would be requested of the specific divisions in DEP. DLRP does not think that it is appropriate for us to have a seat on the Council. We can commit to attending these meetings moving forward, without having a seat on the Council. Would that meet the needs you were trying to fulfill by having a DLRP seat? M. Gregg- Why don't you want a seat on this Council? K. LeWarn- My supervisors have spoken on this item, and they don't believe it's appropriate for the regulatory

agency and the role that we provide regulatorily to be voting on the Council. We should just be a resource for your questions. M. Gregg- This points to why we placed DLRP on the Council, you are here and you cannot answer some of our questions. DLRP has the final say on where structures can go and if we don't have them in this room, we are not going to advance. I think it's practical to have an expectation from them to have a policy on where aquaculture is going to take place in the state. If they are not at the table, then it's not a productive discussion. Sec. Wengryn- I can have this discussion with the Commissioner. M. Acquafredda- If voting is one of the issues, they could still be a member, but not have a vote, right? Sec. Wengryn- The issue is that they would be advising on their potential regulatory authority. M. Acquafredda- There are two things with this request, if I understand correctly. One is the face time the growers are requesting with the regulatory entities. There is also wanting a board that is providing recommendations to the state and having the state officials present to discuss items before providing a recommendation.

N. Gaine- It's important to recognize the charge of the Council, to advise the Department of Agriculture on aquaculture development. It is not advising the DLRP but NJDA, and so we want to have DLRP, and the others listed in the room as we devise recommendations on how to develop aquaculture in the state. Having all the players, including Kip who is boots on the ground, is what we want as we have these discussions. Kip, I appreciate you being here today because we did request it last Council meeting. D. Zemeckis- Our charge and bylaws are to advise the Department of Agriculture and other state agencies, so how do we take action on that? Whether voting or nonvoting, I think this is a chance to figure that out.

Sarah Mellor read chat comment from Bill Avery- As I recall it took at least ten years to get a rep from Land Use to show up to a meeting, thanks for being there Kip.

L. Muetter- When the legislator developed a Council like this, the intent was to include the heads of a department. To have others attend, the Council can write to the heads of the Departments to request attendees. That is a much easier ask than changing the Council. Speaking from the Health Department perspective, I don't think the intent was to have multiple DEP representatives and one from the Health Department. From a regulatory perspective, I see shaking up some of the nonregulatory representatives, but for regulatory it should stay the same, it should be the heads of those specific departments.

M. Gregg- From the industry perspective, having the specific divisions in the room helps when we're trying to make sure we are doing everything right and we have questions that we need the right people in the room to answer. Sec. Wengryn- Is it that the representative is not going back to the right divisions and getting answers for you? That could be an issue with how the Council works, not the representatives. M. Gregg- It could be that. To be specific this Council has been having a conversation for years over the permit fees for FLUPSYs. Right now, you have to pay an application fee for the permit in an area where you already pay a tidelands fee for the boat slip where they are located. This is an example of an item where we had questions and never got answers. We should not have a permit fee for a FLUPSY; it's a hinderance to the industry. Sec. Wengryn- So you asked a question and did not get an answer. My other question is, have you made a motion and asked for the fees to be dropped, made a formal request to the government? M. Gregg- No, it is in regulation. From what I've been told, this requires a regulation change, and they are working on it. L. Calvo- It's a good point, that if they had a seat on this Council and had been

in the room, they would know that this discussion has been happening. They would know when the rule was coming up and they would be engaged with developing the industry. It needs to be someone that is at a higher level than application review, someone that is thinking about spatial planning and how all the things we're doing interrelate. D. Zemeckis- I think that some of us, myself included, want to move beyond writing letters and use this venue to bring everybody together at one location to make progress.

Sec. Wengryn tabled the topic for the reasons he listed above but thanked the room for sharing feedback.

#### DEP Updates

Russ Babb- Atlantic Coast Shellfisheries Council Regulatory Committee is a 16-member industry committee, with representatives from all sectors- hard clam depuration to on-bottom to structural. The Committee is serving to provide the Bureau informal public input on pre-proposal regulatory concepts, a review for a future regulatory change on shellfish harvest and aquaculture. It is taking all disparate rules and placing them into a single chapter. Looking at an 18-month development process, but that is contingent on OAL. This is not a formal process; that would be once the rules are proposed.

CZM funded grants- One was macroalgae and finfish aquaculture, determining the appropriate species for NJ. We are waiting on the final paper for that study. Currently working with Mike [Acquafredda] and Rutgers on a study of hatcheries in New Jersey from a permitting perspective. What are the barriers, financial incentives, streamline options, etc. We have three different submerged aquatic vegetation mapping projects underway, working with Rutgers and Stockton. We do have a proposal with Bloustein School at Rutgers to examine working waterfronts. Lastly, the Bureau put in for a BIL grant last year and now we have to implement the \$1.3million grant to expand our Atlantic City shell recycling and shell restoration projects. That one is a big project but we're working with our partners at Stockton, Rutgers, Jetty, ALS, and Atlantic City schools.

L. Calvo- What was the criteria for the representatives on the Atlantic Coast Committee? It feels like you are doing a statewide initiative on the Atlantic Coast. R. Babb- The Delaware Bay has not created their committee yet, but they are creating their own. The invitation to participate went out to all license holders or leaseholders. Then the Council agreed to membership. L. Calvo- Those questions about placing aquaculture, is really pertinent to this Council and maybe this Council should have more engagement. R. Babb- This is the informal run up to the actual writing of regulations. We know we have to engage different members and agencies. There are some committee members in this room, there is some overlap.

Sarah Gentile- The 2024 Vibrio Control Plan has been posted on the website. Also, we went to one of the Shellfish Council committee meetings to discuss bird deterrents on floating gear. At that meeting, some growers shared some helpful suggestions. That was on March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Kip LeWarn- For DLRP, we are also involved in the grants that Russ mentioned. We are looking for when the rules open, which we don't have a timeline yet for. We are in the queue and thinking about rule changes and the grants will support that, as well as conversations with growers.



### ***Council Committee Reports***

#### **Marketing Committee- D. Zemeckis**

In the January meeting, agritourism resources came up and I connected with Claudia Gil Arroyo, a County Ag extension agent in charge of agritourism in Cape May County. There is an extension agritourism working group, and she will bring the topic of agritourism for aquaculture to the group. Some gaps to explore are aquaculture agritourism from other states, documents and resources that already exist in NJ, and then filling in the gap for aquaculture agritourism here in NJ.

#### **Legislative Committee- M. Gregg**

Discussed the Jersey Fresh bill and previous meeting motion to send a letter. Since there were changes between meetings, the letter was on hold.

Now that the AAC Composition draft has been provided to the Council, our next charge is the financial incentives for hatchery and nursery development. It was tabled before because it was beyond the scope of our expertise. We welcome attendees outside the Committee, but especially for this topic.

Discussion on taxes and farmland assessment differential taxation being the result of a constitutional change.

#### **ADP Recommendation Status Chart- A. Wenczel Arians**

Review of the ADP Recommendation Update chart handed out at meeting.

Marketing- Jersey Fresh is in progress in the legislature and there have been discussions on the quality standards that would be needed to incorporate aquaculture in regulations. Agritourism discussed already. Nothing has moved with Specialty Crop designation, that is a federal designation.

Leadership- most are continuous. In progress is AAC Composition, just discussed.

Permitting- many are waiting for a regulatory change, or regulatory committee action. In progress is the recommendation on subtidal harvest and that is a DEP/DOH authority; looking for update next meeting.

Hatchery/Nursery- most are in regulatory committee. Seed importation is underway, so it is listed as in-progress as the RSSBP continues to develop.

Leasing & Ag- most completed or continuous. Differential tax program dovetails with incentives with hatchery/nursery, topic planned for Legislative Committee.

Research- numerous are completed or continuous.

Workforce Development- several projects underway so they are listed as in-progress. Sec. Wengryn suggested speaking with farmers who conduct internship/mentorships to answer some lingering questions (e.g., insurance).

New Opportunities- waiting on final paper on macroalgae Russ mentioned. No offshore aquaculture proposed so that is on hold/as needed. D. Zemeckis- Daphne Munroe lab looking at potential for offshore surf clam production to mitigate losses from wind farms. Research already underway. M. Acquafredda- This is started and looking to become bigger in the next few years. A. Wenczel Arians- The recommendation was looking to address commercial scale, but if this starts to increase in scale, this recommendation could be triggered.

L. Calvo- Under research, the comprehensive spatial plan, I feel like that should be continuous. We have a siting tool, not a comprehensive plan. A. Wenczel Arians- Mike De Luca stated it should be changed from continuous to completed.

M. Gregg- Is the Vibrio Plan going to be sent out to growers or dealers? S. Gentile- It is on our website. We have never sent it out before; that may have been the Department of Health. \* DEP & DOH noted that there are no substantive changes to plan from last year.

#### Shellfish Council Updates

Steve Fleetwood (Delaware Bay)- We have had some problems with bird deterrents; Sarah has been proactive on trying to resolve issues. I say this all the time, these are federal rules made at the ISSC. They're not state rules, and we have to comply with these to keep interstate shipment secure. I'm an industry representative for the ISSC Executive Board and we had quite a lengthy meeting a couple of weeks ago. This is a huge issue on the national level, New Jersey is not being singled out.

We have also had meetings with CDC and FDA on the detrimental news about illnesses. We had a meeting with CDC because they have been lax with data and cases- they use 80,000 but do not extrapolate out the number of cases that are from shellfish. A lot of illnesses have been water-related and have not involved shellfish. FDA told us that new releases of recalls will be done in the proper context.

Recently, Virginia [Wheatley] with the DOH and Gary Wolf with the FDA had a meeting with the state health agencies. I was one of several speakers, talking about all the rules and regulations to take care of this product. I can do everything in my power to make sure my product is safe, but once it leaves here, I have no control. It was a great meeting. I think our public health people will understand our industry better. Sec. Wengryn requested the webinar be shared.

#### ***Councilmember Comments***

L. Calvo- Shuckfest in Philly, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, heavily represented by New Jersey shellfish farmers. M. Gregg added that the Oyster House, event sponsor, is one of the largest supporters of NJ oyster farmers.

M. Acquafredda- The shellfish apprenticeship program through NJ Sea Grant and Rutgers went to 12 high schools and engaged with over 750 students to give them an idea of shellfish farming and recruit students. We have funding for 12-14 high school students this year.

L. Muetter- For the summer Vibrio plan, harvesters who want to be involved from the DOH perspective, the sooner they get their plan in to the shellfish project, the easier and quicker it can

be approved. We do on-site inspections and surveillance, but the earlier we can plan the easier it can be for the farmers.

M. Gregg- Went to DC recently with the ECSGA. The priorities for 2024 include supporting aquaculture in the farm bill, supporting working waterfronts, requesting more aquaculture research within NOAA, move the CDC to change their website language on Vibrio illnesses, encourage the aquaculture exemption in the Coastal Barrier Resource Act, and encourage money to be allocated to shellfish genetics research for oysters and clams.

D. Zemeckis- Registration is now open for the annual coastal stewardship class. We use shellfish biology and aquaculture as a primary teaching tool to educate local stakeholders about responsible stewardship of our local resources.

Sean Towers- At the Aquaculture Innovation Center we have seen an impressive growth in the demand for seed. I want to commend this Council and others for helping the progress with the industry. We are also not just a hatchery; we encourage the industry to leverage our expertise, facility, and resources not just for space but also as an incubator facility. Our group is also working to develop some form of hatchery training programs. It's an area where a lot of collaboration can push that forward. Contact us for seed orders, we know a number of new growers and increasing size growers are looking for seed this year.

Sam Ratcliff- Cape shore facility updates. The gabion wall repair process is moving to the scheduling step next week. This will help with ATV access location. We are active with RSSBP certification. We have another active repair, remodeling and flooring within the classroom and hatchery expansion. This will allow areas for future meetings and workshops. That is looking to be ready in early June.

Sec. Wengryn did a quick introduction and background.

### ***Old Business***

None.

### ***Public Comment***

N. Gaine echoed Steve's comments commending the DOH on their workshop. The County inspectors are the boots on the ground, and this helps us when an issue arises.

N. Gaine- A Regulatory Committee was formed last meeting. The chair is not here, but did we populate the committee? What is the procedure moving forward? How do we confirm people on the committee? A. Wenczel Arians- An email went out and we have the list of interested members. All who emailed are on the committee. We have to figure out a Vice Chair while Barney is not available. N. Gaine stressed that we need to meet and get this moving. Sec. Wengryn- I will work with Amanda to get the Committee up and running.

M. Williams- Will everything for the ADP come through the subcommittees or will it be discussed at these meetings? Sec. Wengryn- The Committees will bring us items to discuss and take action on in these meetings. M. Williams- By my count, there are 39 recommendations and 15 have no

action. Can we move everything to a committee to move it before three months? I've been here since the beginning of the ADP, and we haven't moved on some of these things. If we keep waiting three months, it becomes a year before we move on anything. We cannot seem to get anything moving. Can we also make the committees move? Sec. Wengryn- Do you have a specific item you want the committee to work on? M. Williams- All of them are important. All marketing into marketing committee, same for permitting. Sec. Wengryn- I hear you. A plan is not everything will be done in five years, so we need to prioritize. You are all volunteers, so we need to prioritize what you're going to focus on. M. Williams- The Plan was developed on a priority list from a survey, but we discussed agritourism and that was at the lowest ranking. We have a ranking, so I don't understand why we are not working on the top items. Sec. Wengryn- I don't have the priority list, so what can be done now. M. Williams- All the hatchery & nursery section needs to be worked on, especially the first and last recommendations. Sec. Wengryn- We can look into a timetable for those. I hope everyone knows that a regulatory review is every seven years. It can be done earlier but that is when it is best to make a change to a rule. M. Williams- If we need to develop a new permit, should we develop exactly what we want in a permit and bring that to a meeting, or should we have an open discussion with the larger group? Sec. Wengryn- A little of both. We need to know what is working and what the industry wants.

M. Acquafredda- Through the funding I received from DEP, I am going to be looking into the questions of barriers and enhancements for hatchery and nursery development. Part of this will include surveying folks who already have these operations as well as growers who may want to diversify or just buy seed. I wrote the grant to be finished by September 2025. There will be grower input like Matt mentioned.

M. Williams- My point is the ADP in general. Is the Council going to push for these items to be finished or is it outside parties that push for the items to be accomplished. I just want to know how it is done. Sec. Wengryn- It is a conversation that is ongoing. It is a Council discussion but also from the community to bring these issues to the Council to say where we need to do more work. Some of the items in the plan are longer than five years.

D. Zemeckis- For this current ADP, there was a survey of growers that had a relatively low response that informed the start of the committee to develop the plan. A lot of these tasks are outward looking and that is why we set up new committees over time to try to tackle them when some parties were not fully engaged.

L. Calvo- It would really be helpful to hear from DEP on their regulatory cycle and where our recommendations can be addressed via regulatory change. We need to be working within DEP to know how to move these items. Sec. Wengryn- If that is a priority, then that is what we work on. There is a lot here and the wheels of government do move slow. Sometimes, it can be as simple as emailing to get things moving or having committee members step up to help when a chair cannot make the meeting. The Department staff can also assist in making things happen.

Motion to adjourn.  
Meeting adjourned.