

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ATLANTIC COAST SECTION OF THE NEW JERSEY
SHELLFISHERIES COUNCIL

Virtual Meeting
February 8, 2021

Present were: Chairman: John J. Maxwell (Atlantic County)
 Vice Chairman: Walter L. Johnson III (Ocean County)
 Councilman: Paul T. Felder (Cape May County)
 Councilman: George Mathis Jr. (Burlington County)
 Councilman: Vacant (Monmouth County)

DEP Representatives: Joe Cimino, Marine Fisheries Administration
 Russell Babb, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Jeffrey Normant, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Kira Dacanay, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Jenny Tomko, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Elizabeth Lange, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Megan Kelly, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Lloyd Lomelino, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Scott Stueber, Bureau of Shellfisheries
 Robert Schuster, Marine Water Monitoring

Mr. Normant read the State's compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act and announced that the meeting would be recorded, and notice was filed with the Secretary of State Office.

1. Total Revenue for January 2021	\$ 4,690.26
Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund	\$ 1,974.00

2. Presentation of January 11, 2021 minutes for approval.

Mr. Johnson stated he was unable to review the January 11, 2021 minutes. He requested that approval of the minutes be tabled until he received a copy to review. Mr. Maxwell stated that the January minutes would be presented at the March meeting for approval.

3. Old Business:

Leasing Committee Update

Mr. Normant stated the Leasing Committee had met earlier in the day to discuss changes to the Committee structure. They recommended separating the Leasing Committee into two new committees: Leasing Policy Committee and Leasing Regulatory Committee. Membership would not change from the prior composition of the former Subcommittees except for the additions of Mr. Gregg and Mr. Glenn to the Leasing Policy Committee and Leasing Regulatory Committee, respectively. The Committee recommended that councilmen not be assigned specifically to the Leasing Policy or Leasing Regulatory committees. Instead each councilman would have the option to rotate between the Committees as necessary. A motion was made by Mr. Mathis to create a Leasing Policy Committee and Leasing Regulatory Committee that report directly to the Shellfisheries Council. The motion was seconded by Mr. Felder.

Mr. Maxwell asked how the Committees would move forward. Mr. Normant stated there would be a Leasing Policy Committee meeting on February 22. He added that two Councilmen would

have to be assigned to the Lease Policy Committee. Mr. Mathis and Mr. Johnson volunteered to attend the meeting.

The Leasing Committee discussed creating a new lease area off Waretown in Barnegat Bay. Mr. Normant informed the Council that there was a proposal from three growers to place on-bottom gear/cages from the Barnegat Light leases to the western side of the Barnegat Bay near Waretown to overwinter their oysters. They were currently using another person's lease to place bottom gear for overwintering of product. A recommendation was made by Committee to present this new lease area for overwintering to the Shellfisheries Council. Due to the proposed lease area being classified as seasonally approved waters, Mr. Mathis recommended that no marketable shellfish be allowed on the lease after April 30th. It was also recommended to limit the gear use to on-bottom only and restrict floating cages or gear in the water column due to high vessel traffic in that area. Mr. Maxwell agreed with his recommendation. Mr. Normant said they could add that statement into the Leasing Policy. Hearing no opposition to the Leasing Committee's proposal, the Council approved the Leasing Committee's recommendation to allow applications for three new leases off Waretown for on bottom overwintering of product from the Barnegat Light leases. Mr. Normant stated that the three growers should reach out to Mr. Lomelino to begin their application process.

Mr. Normant explained to the Council that the Leasing Committee recommended that the Leasing Policy address concerns regarding the need for lease expansion. The processes for proposed lease expansion specific to each lease area was defined under Council action. No additional action was deemed necessary by the Committee. Hearing no opposition from the Council the recommendation was approved unanimously.

Hard Clam Management Plan

At the January 2021 Council Meeting, the Council and Bureau had discussed the potential to initiate a discussion outlining a path forward for a Hard Clam Management Plan. Mr. Normant stated that the Bureau would need to compile the necessary data and information and identify any missing information before a formal management plan was composed. He added, the Bureau had begun internal discussions about what those needs were to try and establish the framework for a management plan and the Bureau would present their recommended approach to the Council. Mr. Mathis asked how long that would take. Mr. Normant stated he was unsure of the timeframe. Mr. Babb said a list of items was already under development in-house and he suggested that the Bureau could provide this to the Council at their next meeting. Mr. Mathis suggested the Council consider developing a committee for a Hard Clam Management Plan. He emphasized the importance of this task, and stated he was eager to participate. Mr. Johnson stated he would like to make sure this item was not pushed to the side or replaced by other topics. Bureau staff stated that there were a number of ways to approach this. One approach was the try to include all items initially and work towards an all-inclusive plan. The alternative approach would be to get the main core FMP requirements in place sooner and continue to work to include the additional items over time. Mr. Normant told him the Bureau would have "hard clam management plan" as an agenda item for all Council meetings going forward to discuss progress and maintain an open dialogue with the Council about the topic.

Aquaculture Development Plan Discussion

Ms. Wenczel stated that the Aquaculture Development Plan was set to be updated by the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) every five years. The Plan aims to evaluate and provide recommendations on how the industry could continually progress and grow going forward. The

Shellfish Council provided comments on the latest draft in December. The AAC will be holding a meeting on February 25 at 8:30am to discuss the comments with shellfish growers.

2021 Bureau of Shellfisheries Surveys

Mr. Maxwell inquired on the Bureau's plans for the 2021 survey year. Mr. Normant informed him the Bureau anticipated starting the Raritan Bay segment of the federal Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (IJ) grant this spring. Once completed, staff would shift into the Great Egg Harbor Estuarine Inventory. Lastly, staff would assess sampling the shallow estuaries south of Atlantic County. Mr. Maxwell asked if all the survey plans were based on receiving of the IJ Grant. Ms. Dacanay said that the IJ Funding would only be used for the Raritan Bay/Sandy Hook Bay surveys. Mr. Maxwell inquired about the timeframe of shallow water estuarine surveys. Ms. Dacanay explained that it was dependent on several factors including when other survey work was completed, developing a sampling design, and potentially acquiring a new shallow water survey vessel.

4. New Business:

2020 Mullica River Oyster Seed Bed Conditions

Ms. Dacanay provided the Council with a presentation on the results from Mullica River Oyster Seed Bed Survey. She reminded the Council the survey was not a stock assessment, but rather a glimpse into changes of bed conditions from year to year as percent change of oyster to shell and mortality estimates of adult oysters. General trends show an increase over time from 2017-2019, and a small decrease in 2020. Mr. Johnson asked if this information had been mailed to him. Ms. Dacanay told him the Bureau would send out the final report when the disease analysis come in from Rutgers University.

Hearing no new business, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Felder.

5. Date, time, and place of next meeting:

DATE:	March 15, 2021
TIME:	6:00 PM
LOCATION	Virtual