



VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)

Board Meeting

Thursday August 17, 2023/ 1:00 P.M.

VIMS Dean and Director's Room

Waterman's Hall

Gloucester Point, VA

CALL TO ORDER: Mike Oesterling called the meeting to order at 1:13 P.M. nine board members were present which represents a quorum.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ann Gallivan

J.C. Hudgins

Daniel Knott

Beverly Ludford

Trey Sowers

Taylor Deihl

Monica Schenemann

Mike Oesterling

Jonathan van Senten

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Mike Congrove

Nathan Bussels

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Hutt, VMPB

Owen Hynson, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jamie Green, Commissioner of VMRC

Ben Stagg, Executive Director of Shellfish Growers Association

Kim Husky, Cherrystone Aquafarms

Bill Walton, VIMS

Andrew Scheld, VIMS

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:

Introduction of attendance at meeting.

MINUTES:

Beverly Ludford made a motion to approve the minutes from May 18, 2023, Monica Schenemann seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Japanese Embassy DC-Virginia Seafood Event, June 6, 2023: Mike Hutt delivered Scallops and Catfish fillets to the Japanese Embassy in DC on June 5 for them to serve at a dinner they were hosting on June 6. VDACS provided the cost of the Scallops and Catfish fillets. Mike Hutt heard reports after the dinner that guests were impressed with Virginia seafood.

VA Tech Video Cooking Catfish June 7, 2023: Mike Hutt was at the Virginia Seafood AREC in Hampton on June 7 with Chef Greg Burroughs. Mike and Chef Burroughs shot a live segment preparing four recipes for Blue Catfish. Chef Burroughs demonstrated cooking the four recipes to make simple tasty meals at home with Blue Catfish.

Virginia Ag Week June 12-16/Industry Tour with Secretary Matt Lohr: On June 15 and 16 Mike Hutt was taking Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr and Deputy Secretary Beth Green on a tour of the Virginia seafood industry. Over the course of two days they toured Blue Catfish, Oyster, and Clam facilities in the Middle Peninsula and Eastern Shore. They both learned a lot about the seafood industry from the tour and are excited to participate in any future tours.

VA Seafood Fishmonger Airings: The airing of The Fishmonger filming from last year was broken into two parts. Part 1 highlighting Blue Crabs, Blue Catfish, and Clams was aired on June 19 and Part 2 highlighting Menhaden and Oysters was shown on July 3. Mike Hutt informed the board that he had received positive impact from multiple members of the commercial seafood industry, and they noticed a very large increase to hits on their websites during the airing of these episodes. Mike Hutt informed the board that Tommy Gomes is interested in returning to Virginia to film in the future.

Seafood Source News April 2023 Ads Activity Report: The total clicks as of the end of April 2023 were 624 clicks and the click through rate was .11%. Seafood Source also gave us a free placement in their Weekly Global Newsletter in May the total clicks as of the end of May 2023 were 35 clicks and the click through rate was .08%.

Undercurrent News July 2023 Ads Activity Report: The total number of clicks as of the end of July 2023 were 1282 clicks and the click through rate is .48%.

2022 Billboard Ads:

- **Adams:** The VMPB had an eight-week run with Adams between 5/1/23-6/25/23 during that time we received 71,612 plays and 1,919,632 impressions.
- **Lamar:** We received two reports from Lamar about the VMPB campaign. The first report covers a period from 6/19/23-7/23/23 and shows that we received 81,954 plays and 1,816,069.74 impressions. The second report covers a period from 7/24/23-8/3/23 and shows that we received 22,950 plays and 508,563.35 impressions.

VA Tech Eat More Oysters Program August 9, 16, 23, 2023: This is an online webinar focused on Virginia Oysters. Mike Hutt participated in the August 9 webinar. During the webinar Mike Hutt presented a PowerPoint on the importance to Virginia's economy, environment, and the health benefits oysters offer consumers. Mike Hutt also discussed the role of the VMPB in the commercial seafood industry and how the VMPB connects with consumers.

Seafood Expo Asia 2023: Mike Hutt informed the board that we were unable to find enough exhibitors to make the trip feasible, so SUSTA canceled the trip. Mike Hutt informed the board that this is the second year in a row that companies expressed interest when SUSTA decided on participating but backed out when it became time to sign up.

VA State Fair Black Boots & Tie Event September 22, 2023: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be serving ½ shell oysters at the fairgrounds in Doswell on the first night of the State Fair. Mike and Owen will know more information about the time of the event later. Last year was the first year they participated in this event, and it was very successful. We are currently looking into who they will get to provide oysters and shucking for the event.

2024 Legislative Seafood Luncheon: Mike Hutt has not been told an exact date yet but has been informed that it will be the first Wednesday of the first full week of the next legislative session. The location of the event will be moved to the new legislative building. As we move closer to the event the board will enter more discussion on the menu now it is suggested to add clams and oysters.

NEW BUSINESS

Delegate Hodges Wild Blue Catfish Meeting May 30, 2023: Mike Hutt and JC Hudgins were both participants in this meeting. The proposed request for \$4 million dollars of grants for Blue Catfish processing machinery was reduced to \$2 million by the appropriations committee. This money will not be made available until the states budget is passed. Once the budget passes the application process will go through the county the applicant is from. VDACS will handle the distribution of the funds with no matching funding from each locality. Every applicant may apply for up to \$250,000.00.

Invasive NOAA Catfish Taskforce Meeting July 19, 2023: Mike Hutt participated in this meeting and informed the board that they will be creating a subcommittee, of which he will be a member of, on marketing Blue Catfish. Mike Hutt informed the board that NOAA has been very supportive on helping with the Blue Catfish issue.

VDACS International Marketing Chef and Media Tour August 30, 2023: Jesse Phillips from VDACS will be bringing chefs, media people, and consultants from France and Canada for Mike Hutt to take on an industry tour. They will be going to Amory Seafood to observe catfish processing, Chesapeake Bay Packing to see their Scallop operation, Hampton Seafood Market to observe Johnny Graham's store front and restaurant and if time allows it a tour of his crab picking facility.

Virginia Aquaculture Conference November 10-11, 2023: This event will be hosted by VIMS and be held at the Newport News City Center Marriot. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be attending this event to exhibit and register Aquaculture growers that are not already in their Oyster directory and to help serve oysters at the dinner reception.

New Kent Winery serving ½ shell oysters for the Agriculture and Forestry Governor's event September 13, 2023: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be at this event serving oysters. They will have more information on the exact time of this event later. Mike and Owen are still looking into who they will get for shucking this event and where they will receive the oysters from.

River City Shuck & Roll October 21, 2023: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be at this event in Richmond doing educational work and handing out promotional material. They do not know yet the exact times of this event.

VMPB Meeting November 16, 2023: The next VMPB meeting will be held on November 16, 2023, 1:00 P.M. at VIMS in Gloucester Point. At this time, it is known you will not need to receive a parking pass for the meeting. It is not known at this time if the meeting will take place at the Waterman's Hall conference room or be moved due to construction.

Virginia Agribusiness Legislative Reception January 2024: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be attending this event serving oysters. Mike Hutt has been told that a date has not been set yet for this event. Mike and Owen are currently looking into who they will be receiving oysters from and who they will get to shuck for this event. The VMPB booth is the highlight of the event with half shell oysters being served.

Seafood Expo North America 2024 March 10-12, 2024: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be attending this event. The VMPB has a 20 square foot booth which VDACS cover half of the cost of the floor space. Last year Mike and Owen served Blue Catfish which they are considering doing again. They went through 300 pounds of Blue Catfish in three days last year and generated a lot of positive feedback and industry leads because of it.

Virginia Food & Beverage Show March 27, 2024: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be exhibiting at this event. This is a one-day trade show in Richmond that VDACS provides the booth cost of for the VMPB. Mike and Owen are still deciding on if they will be sampling seafood at this show.

Seafood Expo Global 2024 April 23-25, 2024: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be attending this event representing the SUSTA region in the SUSTA pavilion. Mike Hutt's travel will be covered fully by SUSTA because he is a co-activity manager for this show. Owen's travel and lodging will be provided by VMPB funds. Mike and Owen will be assisting SUSTA region co-exhibitors, promoting SUSTA region seafood, and gathering trade leads for Virginia and other SUSTA region companies. This event is very important because while they are under the SUSTA banner Mike and Owen are still helping any Virginia companies that are exhibiting at the show and the leads that they generate for the Virginia seafood industry are very beneficial. Mike and Owen are considering which products to sample at this year's show, last year they sampled Blue Catfish and Scallops which generated numerous leads for the industry.

2023 Seafood Processors Wage Survey: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson have sent this survey out to the industry, have had it returned, and then have completed their part determining the average wage based on each participant.

2023 Fish, Baitfish, Shellfish Wage Survey: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson have sent this survey out to the industry, have had it returned, and then have completed their part determining the average wage based on each participant.

2023 Crab Picking Wage Survey: Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson have sent out this survey to the industry and are waiting until they have an appropriate number of participants to complete this survey. Surveys are due back to the VMPB by August 25, 2023.

FY 2023-2024 Proposed Budget: Beverly Ludford made a motion approving the budget as presented to the board. Taylor Diehl seconded the motion. After the motion discussion was held on this vote. Ann Gallivan had a question on if the funding for the 2024 Legislative Luncheon would be sufficient. Mike Hutt informed her that the total of last years luncheon came well under the current amount budgeted for it, but this could be increased if needed later. Mike Oesterling had a question on SUSTA's continuing participation in Seafood Expo Asia and if the budget gets tight spending less on this event. Mike Hutt informed the board currently SUSTA is still interested in participating in Seafood Expo Asia moving forward but if the board funds are running low he can travel on this trip by himself without Owen. Mike Hutt is a co-activity manager for this event as well so his participation would not cost the board. JC Hudgins asked Mike about the Oyster F.I.P. line item in the budget and what is the total remaining amount for the Oyster F.I.P. Mike Hutt informed him that the \$12,000.00 dollars listed on the line item is the last of what's owed. Dan Knott had a question on if throughout the course of the year that we could add or subtract the amount listed on the line items depending on how much funding is needed. Mike Hutt informed him that the board could do this these line items are just guides to go by at the beginning of the year. Beverly suggested going forward that we add a line item for bumper stickers, promotional material, and educational material. After discussion a roll call vote was held.

- Ann Gallivan-Aye
- J.C. Hudgins-Aye
- Dan Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Mike Oesterling-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye

Nine Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

Monterey Bay Aquarium Guidance on Eastern Oysters: Dan Knott informed the board of the support the commercial seafood industry has received from VIMS and the VMRC on Monterey Bay Aquarium reclassification of Virginia's wild oysters from alternative to avoid. Jamie Green informed the board that the VMRC does not support the rating and that he sent a letter and will be discussing this with the Director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium their reasoning for the downgrade and numbers that will refute the downgrade.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS – Andrew Scheld introduced to the board a presentation he was working on highlighting how pricing affects the demand in Blue Catfish. Throughout the presentation Andrew’s research showed a steady increase in harvest of Blue Catfish in line with a price per pound increase, even amount watermen currently not targeting Blue Catfish. Andrew’s research also showed that presenting consumers with more information on Blue Catfish increased their favorability of the product and how much they would theoretically pay for the product. Andrew also revealed based on responses during the study that wild caught Blue Catfish is competitively priced compared to farm raised catfish.

Virginia Tech – Jonathan informed the other members of the board that the Seafood AREC is currently looking into hiring a K-12 coordinator to better manage and give more opportunities for classes to tour the facility.

VMRC – Jamie Green informed the board that the VMRC will be heavily invested in the state fair this year. The VMRC will be involved in Environment Virginia and is on the committee this year. VMRC is partnering with the Secretary of Labor on an apprentice ship program for vocational students interested in all areas of the seafood industry. VMRC is restarting the SeaFab board, it will have nine members, and Ben Johnson will serve as the chair. Jamie also informed the board that the VMRC will be doing an in-depth impact study of the seafood that will include both the commercial and recreational industries.

Virginia Seafood Council – Kim Husky informed the board that the Oyster F.I.P. is nearly completed, Ann Gallivan asked Kim if she knows what the next step will be in the process, Mike Hutt informed the board that he has been talking with Tommy Kellum about and will have more information at the next board meeting. Kim also informed the board that the Virginia Seafood Council is lobbying on the federal level to get seafood workers a separate category away from the rest of the H2B worker lottery.

Virginia Waterman’s Association – JC Hudgins informed the board that the Blue Crab season has been up and down on prices, but prices are now around \$80.00 a bushel for number ones and \$40.00 dollars a bushel for females. The Oyster has been good slightly down from last year. The spat set was good this year and that they opened one month of hand scraping in the York River. J.C. informed the board that he met with the Lt. Governor Winsome Sears and Delegate Hodges for a tour of the Oyster Industry. J.C. also informed the board that on September 23, 2023, the Virginia Waterman’s Association will be having a crab feast fundraiser at Buzzard Point in Reedville, VA. The proceeds from this fundraiser will go to the Waterman’s Association scholarship fund.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Ben Stagg was in attendance and informed the board that he is the new Executive Director of Shellfish Growers of Virginia. Ben informed the board that he has been placed on the AMAC committee, the Ag Aquaculture Infrastructure Committee, and if needed is welcome to serving on the VMPB.

Omega Protein – Taylor Deihl informed the board that if any board members are interested in touring the facility, they will set it up and that Omega Protein is also open to hosting a VMPB meeting during their season and to have a tour take place then.

Cooperative Programs

VDACS – No report.

Financial Report

Mike Hutt reported a carry over for FY 2023-2024 of \$592,308.42 and a balance of \$592,308.42 as of June 30th, 2023.

PUBLIC COMMENT - None

TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.

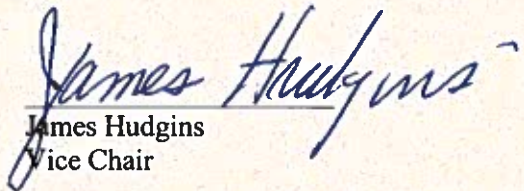
ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Hutt
Executive Director



James Hudgins
Vice Chair

