



**FINAL**  
**VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday August 15, 2024/ 1:00 P.M.**  
**VIMS, Waterman's Hall**  
**Gloucester Point, VA**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mike Hutt called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. ten board members were present which represents a quorum.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Terri Graham Wallace  
Chris Sopko  
Daniel Knott  
Monica Schenemann  
William Sexauer  
Beverly Ludford  
Mike Congrove  
Trey Sowers  
Jonathan van Senten  
Nathan Bussels

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Taylor Deihl

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Mike Hutt, VMPB  
Owen Hynson, VMPB

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Bruce Vogt, Virginia Oyster Trails  
Bill Walton, VIMS  
Melissa Ball, VDACS  
Kim Husky, Cherrystone Aquafarms  
Shelby White, VIMS  
Kyle Rowley, Skrimp Shack  
Stewart Petoe, Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council  
J.C. Hudgins, Virginia Watermans Association  
Michael Schwarz, Virginia Tech Seafood AREC

**INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:**

**Introduction of attendance at meeting.** New VMPB members Terri Graham Wallace and Chris Sopko introduced themselves to the other board members.

**ELECTING OF CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIRPERSON:**

Dan Knott made a motion to nominate Taylor Deihl for the position of Chairperson of the VMPB, after discussion Monica Schenemann seconded the motion and a roll call vote was held.

- **Chris Sopko-Aye**
- **Daniel Knott-Aye**
- **Beverly Ludford-Aye**
- **William Sexauer-Aye**
- **Mike Congrove-Aye**
- **Terri Graham Wallace-Aye**
- **Monica Schenemann-Aye**
- **Jonathan van Senten-Aye**
- **Trey Sowers-Aye**
- **Nathan Bussels-Aye**

**Ten Ayes and no Nays the motion passed 10-0. Taylor Deihl was elected the Chairperson for the VMPB.** Monica Schenemann nominated Daniel Knott for the position of Co-Chairperson of the VMPB, after discussion Terri Graham Wallace seconded the motion and a roll call vote was held.

- **Chris Sopko-Aye**
- **Daniel Knott-Abstained**
- **Beverly Ludford-Aye**
- **William Sexauer-Aye**
- **Mike Congrove-Aye**
- **Terri Graham Wallace-Aye**
- **Monica Schenemann-Aye**
- **Jonathan van Senten-Aye**
- **Trey Sowers-Aye**
- **Nathan Bussels-Aye**

**Nine ayes, no nays, and Daniel Knott abstained from voting. The motion passed 9-0-1 and Daniel Knott was elected the Co-Chairperson for the VMPB.** Daniel Knott then took over the role of leading the meeting because of Taylor Deihl's absence.

**MINUTES:**

Beverly Ludford made a motion to approve the minutes from May 16, 2024, William Sexauer seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS ADVISORY COUNCIL PRESENTATION:**

Stewart Petoe, Executive Director: Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council addressed the VMPB with a presentation on the role of the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council and answered question that board members had on the subject.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Virginia Oyster Trail – Oyster Brochure Suggestions:** Bruce Vogt and Bill Walton of the Virginia Oyster Trail presented the VMPB with some suggested changes to their oyster brochures for the board members to discuss. The Virginia Oyster Trail is suggesting changing the numbering system of the oyster regions on the brochure in favor of a lettering system, having the order of the regions descending by location on the map, and changing the names of some of the oyster regions. The Virginia Oyster Trail hopes that by doing this it will lead to an easier system for tourist to understand and more recognizable region names. The VMPB was receptive to modifying the oyster brochures and held discussion on this topic. It was noted that the VMPB should address all the areas that they would like to see changed on the current oyster brochures before they go about the process of reprinting. Mike Congrove made a motion to allow the Virginia Oyster Trail to explore changes they would like to see made to the VMPB oyster brochure and present these changes to the next board meeting on November 14, 2024. William Sexauer seconded this motion and the motion passed unanimously. Mike Congrove and Trey Sowers will be a part of the committee created by the Virginia Oyster Trail exploring changes to the oyster brochure.

**Seafood Source News July 2024 Ads Activity Report:** During the month of July 2024 Seafood Source gave the VMPB comp placement in the Weekly Global Newsletter with a total of 40,783 impressions, with 18 clicks, and a click through rate of .04%.

**Undercurrent News July 2024 Ads Activity Report:** The total number of impressions as of the end of July 2024 were 226,482 newsletters sent, 353 total clicks and the click through rate is .19%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement during this period which resulted in 92,296 newsletters sent, 233 clicks, and a click through rate of .80%.

### 2022 Billboard Ads:

- **Adams:** The VMPB has an eight-week run with Adams between 5/27/24-7/21/24 through this period we received 70,155 plays and 2,386,352 impressions.
- **Lamar:** The VMPB Lamar summer ad campaign runs from 6/03/24-9/22/24. The Lamar ad campaign has two location one on I-64 near Laburnum Avenue and the other near Midlothian Turnpike. The first report covers a period from 6/19/24-8/6/24 at Laburnum Avenue and shows that we received 54,788 plays and 639,193.33 impressions. The second report covers a period from 6/3/24-8/6/24 at Midlothian Turnpike and shows that we received 15,598 play and 277,064.63 impressions.

**Kyle Rowley – Blue Catfish:** Kyle Rowley of Skrimp Shack came to the VMPB to give his testimony as buyer for 18 franchises in Virginia about serving Blue Catfish in his restaurants. He told the board that he originally became aware of the Blue Catfish issue in the Chesapeake Bay after conversations with Delegate Keith Hodges. Kyle told the board that he has made the invasive Blue Catfish a priority in his restaurant. Kyle has dedicated a significant amount of time promoting Blue Catfish in his franchise locations, educating the public on invasive Blue Catfish, and is currently setting up a time to go out with Mike Hutt and a commercial waterman so they can produce a video for him to play at his franchise locations. Kyle expressed to the board that Skrimp Shack might not be the business that does the heavy lifting on alleviating the invasive Blue Catfish issue, but he wanted to be on the forefront of raising awareness on this issue.

**Real Good Fish – Catfish Tour:** During SENA 2024 Mike Hutt was introduced to Alan Lovewell and Bill Stride. They were interested in touring Virginia’s catfish processing facilities and set up a two-day tour with Mike Hutt on May 23-24, 2024. Alan was unable to travel but Bill was able to attend and toured Virginia’s four Blue Catfish processing facilities on those dates. Mike Hutt also shipped samples of Blue Catfish fillets to Alan and Bill. Bill discussed with Mike a grinding machine to run the Blue Catfish scrap through to get the meat separated from the bones. This can be used to make cakes, burgers, and other value-added products.

**Southern Association of State Department of Agriculture (VDACS) Hosting Tour:** Virginia hosted the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture this year and while hosting VDACS Commissioner Joseph Guthrie led a group of southern states department of agriculture members to tour the new VT Seafood AREC in Hampton, VA. Also, as part of their tour Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson set up across the street at Amory Seafood to serve attendees Blue Catfish fillets. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson also educated attendees on the history of the Blue Catfish and the role of the VMPB in the Virginia Seafood industry.

**Canada Inbound Seafood Buyers Tour – July 15-19, 2024:** Mike Hutt informed the board that this event has been postponed and a make up date is still being discussed.

**Seafood Expo Asia 2024:** Seafood Expo Global 2024 will take place in Singapore between September 4-6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Mike Hutt informed the board that he will be traveling as co-activity manager for SEA 2024 under SUSTA funds. There will be one company from Virginia attending this event.

**VA State Fair Black Tie & Boots Event September 27, 2024:** 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. They have participated in this event the past two years and it has been very successful. They are currently looking into who they will get to provide oysters and shucking for the event.

**2025 Legislative Seafood Luncheon:** Jay Braxton, Assistant Clerk of the House, informed Mike Hutt that the VMPB Legislative Seafood Luncheon will be scheduled for the first Wednesday of the first full week of the legislative session in 2025. The menu will consist of steamed clams, catfish fillets, a seafood soup or chowder, collard greens, and macaroni and cheese. The VMPB gave Mike Hutt the discretion to find catering for this event for the previously agreed upon amount of \$7,000.00 or under if possible.

**2025 Seafood Expo North America:** Seafood Expo North America 2025 will be held in Boston from March 16-18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The VMPB's payment for booth space has already been made for this year and VDACS has continued to contribute half of the cost for the VMPB. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will both be traveling under board funds to partipate in this event on behalf of the VMPB. Mike Hutt has gotten confirmation from the catering company that the VMPB was previously working with for this event that they will be able to cater for us in 2025.

**2025 Seafood Expo Global:** Seafood Expo Global 2025 will be held in Barcelona, Spain between May 6-8<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Mike Hutt informed the VMPB that SUSTA is looking for more involvement from SUSTA area companies and might have to reduce square footage of the SUSTA pavilion in future shows if attendance doesn't improve. Mike Hutt will be traveling as a co-activity manager for SUSTA, and they will be covering the cost of his travel. Owen Hynson will be traveling under VMPB funds to assist Mike Hutt with this event.

**Blue Catfish Video:** As stated earlier in the meeting, Mike Hutt is currently working with members of the industry, Virginia Tech, and VDACS on developing a video about Blue Catfish harvesting to show in his stores. When Blue Catfish are more readily available Mike Hutt and a commercial waterman will go out to shoot this video.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**FY 2023-2024 Proposed Budget:** Beverly Ludford made a motion approving the budget as presented to the board. Mike Congrove seconded the motion. After the motion discussion was held on this vote. After discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexuaer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Nathanal Bussels-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Abstained
- Michael Congrove-Aye

Nine Ayes, one abstention, and the motion passed unanimously.

**ABC News 13 2024-2025 Advertising Proposal:** Mike Hutt presented a proposal to the board advertising with ABC News 13 from 11/1/2024 to 1/31/2025 for a total cost of \$16,300.00. After hearing the proposal Mike Congrove made a motion to approve of the proposal, Nathanal Bussels seconded the motion, and discussion was held. Trey Sowers and Monica Schenemann suggested setting aside some of the VMPB money dedicated to tv advertisement and investigate hiring a social media influencer that would be able to give support to Virginia Seafood in the future. After discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexuaer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Nathanal Bussels-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Michael Congrove-Aye

Ten Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

**NBC News 12 2024-2025 Advertising Proposal:** Mike Hutt presented a proposal to the board advertising with ABC News 13 from 11/1/2024 to 1/31/2025 for a total cost of \$20,690.00. After hearing the proposal Daniel Knott made a motion to approve of the proposal, Johnathan van Senten seconded the motion, and discussion was held. After discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexuaer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Trey Sowers-Aye
- Nathanal Bussels-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Michael Congrove-Aye

Ten Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

**Maryland Sea Grant/Melanie Jepsen, Catfish:** Discussion hosted by the Maryland Sea Grant on Blue Catfish held on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024, that Mike Hutt was requested to be interviewed. Mike informed attendees of this event about the history of Blue Catfish in Virginia, their movement throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, and steps that the VMPB is taking to combat this.

**Virginia Tech Blue Catfish Projects:** Michael Schwarz, Executive Director, of the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC in Hampton, was present and gave the VMPB updates on various ways Virginia Tech is looking into reducing the amount of invasive Blue Catfish in the Chesapeake Bay. Mike Schwarz told the VMPB they are currently looking into ways to utilize the fish waste of processed Blue Catfish to be used in cosmetics, fish oil pills, pet food, etc. by increasing the current value of the Blue Catfish waste Virginia Tech is hoping to make the cost per pound of the fillets cheaper without affecting harvesters or processors. Virginia Tech is also looking into machines that can process Blue Catfish more efficiently, process Blue Catfish after rigor mortis has set in, and/or developing methods for keeping Blue Catfish out of rigor mortis longer and allowing it to leave that state sooner. Mike Schwarz informed the board that Virginia Tech is also searching for grants and other funding streams to pursue these avenues.

**Susan Gaston - Virginia Tech Blue Catfish, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Michael Schwarz also informed the board that he met with Susan Gaston on July 24<sup>th</sup> at the VT Seafood AREC to discuss Blue Catfish. Susan Gaston is a lobbyist representing the Virginia Seafood Industry at the state level that on her own accord met with Michael Schwarz to learn more about the Blue Catfish issue and to see if she could offer any assistance. Mike Hutt was unable to attend the meeting on this date but has kept in contact with Susan Gaston and will discuss possible areas of collaboration in the future.

**Mike Hutt – Samuels Seafood Program, August 8-9<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he traveled to Philadelphia between August 8-9<sup>th</sup> to present a PowerPoint to the sales staff about Wild Blue Catfish. The VMPB recently sponsored an article highlighting Wild Chesapeake Bay Blue Catfish published in Samuels Seafoods newsletter. The VMPB also helped provided pictures and information regarding Blue Catfish. On August 9<sup>th</sup> Mike met with Samuels Seafoods sales staff and gave them background information on the history of Blue Catfish in the Chesapeake Bay and gave them samples to try. Mike informed the board that Samuels Seafoods sales staff was extremely receptive to the information provided and most were very impressed with the high-quality taste of Wild Caught Blue Catfish.

**Eat More Fish – Virginia Tech Program, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Mike Hutt informed the board that the date of this webinar has been changed to September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and that the focus will be on Blue Catfish. Mike Hutt will be giving a presentation on this subject. Kyle Rowley informed the VMPB that he will also be attending this webinar

**Virginia Tech/USDA International Trade Reception, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024:** Mike Hutt informed the board that this event will involve an international group meeting at the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC to learn more about Blue Catfish.

**Potomac River Conference – Reeling in the challenge of Aquatic Invasive Species, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he will be attending this event focused on invasive Snakehead and Blue Catfish populations in the Chesapeake Bay. Mike Hutt will be giving a presentation on the Blue Catfish.

**SUSTA Winter Conference, December 9-11<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson will be attending this event. It will be held in Clearwater, Florida and SUSTA will be paying for both Mike and Owen's travel expenses.

**American Seafood Caucus Board:** Mike Hutt informed the board that Congressman Rob Whittman invited Mike up to the capital to testify on the strength of the Virginia Commercial Seafood Industry. Mike Hutt gave attendees current landings figures and his thoughts about the strength of Virginia Seafood. Mike talked about the positive effects of the clam and oyster industries on Virginia. Mike also talked about issues the Virginia Seafood Industry is having with H2B workers and Blue Catfish impact on other Virginia fisheries.

## **INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS**

**VIMS** – No report.

**Virginia Tech** – Jonathan informed the other board members that registration for the Eat More Fish program is now open. Johnathan also informed the board that Fernando will be sending in his survey questions for review on 8/16/2024 and will be on track to start interviewing Economic Impact Study Phase 2 participants this fall.

**VMRC** – No report.

**Virginia Seafood Council** – Nathan Bussels informed the other board members that Tommy Kellum is working on gaining support in congress for the issues faced in the seafood industry by the limits of the H2B bill. Nathan also informed the board that the Oyster F.I.P. ended it's review period and maintained its A rating and is going through the end of the review process now.

**Virginia Waterman's Association** – JC Hudgins informed the board that he along with several members of the VWA attended the Governor's signing into law the bill supported by Hillary Kent protecting commercial watermen and women. JC informed the board that he along with several watermen, processors, and other members of the Virginia Commercial Seafood Industry met with Congressman Whittman on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to discuss issues currently facing the industry. JC also informed the board that the next Crab Management Meeting will be taking place on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and the VWA will be proposing a year-round crab season. Monica Schenemann informed the board that the VWA will be holding a crab feast at Fairfields Fire Department on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, between 3:00-6:00 p.m. The VWA plans to sell 200 tickets for this event.

**Shellfish Growers of Virginia** – Kim Husky informed the board that members of the SGV were also in attendance at the Governor's signing of the "Right to Fish" bill. The SGV is currently working on what efforts they want to highlight prioritizing in the next legislative session. Kim also informed the board that the SGV is currently working on conducting a study of "Shellfish Environmental Impact on the Chesapeake Bay". The SGV is currently in the process of doing interviews for the Director of SGV.

**Omega Protein** – No Report



**Cooperative Programs**

VDACS – No report.

**Financial Report**

Mike Hutt reported a carry over for FY 2024-2025 of \$654,951.22 and a balance of \$654,951.22 as of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - None**

**TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.**

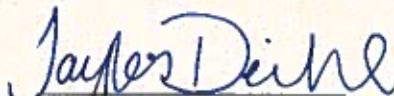
**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Hutt  
Executive Director



Taylor Deihl  
Chair

