

**DRAFT**  
**VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday November 14, 2024/ 1:00 P.M.**  
**VIMS, Waterman's Hall**  
**Gloucester Point, VA**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mike Hutt called the meeting to order at 1:03 P.M. eight board members were present which represents a quorum.

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Terri Graham Wallace  
Chris Sopko  
Daniel Knott  
William Sexauer  
Beverly Ludford  
Mike Congrove  
Taylor Deihl  
Jonathan van Senten

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Trey Sowers  
Monica Schenemann  
Nathan Bussels

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Mike Hutt, VMPB  
Owen Hynson, VMPB

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

Jordan Krevonick, Shellfish Growers of Virginia  
Shelby White, VIMS

**INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:**

**Introduction of attendance at meeting.**

**MINUTES:**

Beverly Ludford made a motion to approve the minutes from August 15, 2024, William Sexauer seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**Virginia Oyster Trail – Oyster Brochure Suggestions:** Mike Hutt informed the board that the Virginia Oyster Trail has requested to present their suggestions for updates to the Oyster Tasting Brochure at the next VMPB meeting.

**Seafood Source News October 2024 Ads Activity Report:** During the month of October 2024 the VMPB had a total of 756,320 impressions, with 412 clicks, and a click through rate of .05% on Seafood Source advertising. Seafood Source gave the VMPB comp placement in the Weekly Global Newsletter with a total of 47,071 impressions, with 48 clicks, and a click through rate of .10%. Seafood Source also gave the VMPB a full-page comp placement ad in their Fall Edition of the Key Buyer Industry Update! This is a twice a year digital publication sent to 1,500 key buyers from SENA 2022-2024. Seafood Source values that placement at \$1,595.00.

**Undercurrent News August, September, October 2024 Ads Activity Report:** The total number of impressions as of the end of October 2024 were 821,783 newsletters sent, 721 total clicks and the click through rate is .29%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement during this period which resulted in 155,694 newsletters sent, 492 clicks, and a click through rate of 1.04%.

### 2024 Billboard Ads:

- **Adams:** The VMPB has an eight-week run with Adams between 10/21/24-12/15/24. From 10/21/24 to 11/5/24 Adams has guaranteed 19,200 plays and delivered 19,562 plays. Adams has also guaranteed 681,817 impressions and delivered 694,672 impressions.

**ABC 13 News Ad Campaign Report:** The VMPB has an ad campaign currently ongoing with ABC 13 News from 11/1/24-1/31/24. From 11/1/24 through 11/10/24 the current results of the campaign are as follows. On the 13News Now app ads featuring Menhaden, Clams, Oysters, Crabs, and supporting commercial watermen have made 17,870 impressions, been clicked on 4 times, and have a click through rate of .02%. ABC 13 News site retargeting has resulted in 12,573 impressions, 42 clicks, and a click through rate of .33%. ABC 13 Nes OTT retargeting has resulted in 28,296 impression, 70 clicks, and a click through rate of .25%.

**NBC 12 News Ad Campaign Report:** The VMPB has an ad campaign currently ongoing with NBC 12 News from 11/1/24-1/31/24. From 11/1/24 through 11/7/24 the current results of the campaign are as follows. Ads ran on social media targeting seafood enthusiasts have been viewed a total of 127,144 times, 53,048 ads have been viewed on the 12 On Your Side weather app, and 41,578 targeted ads have been viewed. So far there have been 221,770 total ads viewed, the VMPB was also given a sponsored article on NBC 12's website which has been read 9,422 times. So far this ad campaign has resulted in 333 website page leads.

**Virginia Tech/USDA International Trade Reception:** This event was held on August 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC in Hampton. The Seafood AREC hosted USDA representatives to discuss the Blue Catfish industry in Virginia. Mike Hutt attended this event on behalf of the VMPB and gave a presentation on Blue Catfish.

**Seafood Expo Asia 2024:** Mike Hutt attended this event as co-exhibitor manger of the SUSTA pavilion. Mike reported that attendance at this show was a little less than SENA 2024. There was a lot of interest in Blue Catfish and Scallops at this show. 31 trade leads were generated and sent out to the industry. SUSTA paid for Mike Hutt's travel for this event, and he suggested to the board that we continue partnering with SUSTA on attending this event.

**Eat More Fish Virginia Tech Program:** On September 11<sup>th</sup> Virginia Tech hosted a webinar on Blue Catfish as part of their "Eat More Fish" program. Mike Hutt participated in the webinar and gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered questions on Blue Catfishes history in Virginia, impact on Virginia's native species, and the current strength of the Blue Catfish fishery.

**VA State Fair Black Tie & Boots Event September 27, 2024:** Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson served ½ shell oysters at the fairgrounds in Doswell on the first night of the State Fair. They served 600 oysters in total, 300 seaside oysters, and 300 river oysters. Rappahannock Oyster Co. provided the oysters and shucking services for this event. The VMPB have participated in this event the past two years and it has been very successful.

**Potomac River Conference – Reeling in the challenge of Aquatic Invasive Species, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** On October 17<sup>th</sup> Mike Hutt attended this event in Lorton focused on invasive Snakehead and Blue Catfish populations in the Chesapeake Bay. Mike Hutt was chosen to speak on invasive Blue Catfish and gave a presentation on the history of their spread into the Chesapeake Bay, the negative impact that they have had on native species in our area, and what steps the Virginia Seafood industry is taking to address the Blue Catfish issue.

**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.

**2025 Legislative Seafood Luncheon:** Jay Braxton, Assistant Clerk of the House, informed Mike Hutt that the VMPB Legislative Seafood Luncheon will be scheduled for January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025. The VMPB have selected Johnny Graham to do the catering for this event. The menu will consist of steamed clams, catfish fillets, a seafood gumbo with oyster crackers, collard greens, hush puppies, and macaroni and cheese. Johnny Graham will be procuring all the food, providing condiments, and utensils as well. The price that Johnny Graham quoted the VMPB was \$8,500.00 to cater this event. Beverly made a motion to increase the funding for this event from \$7,000.00 to \$8,500.00. Johnathan van Senten 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
- Taylor Deihl-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Michael Congrove-Aye

Eight Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

**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 participate 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 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. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson informed the board that they have already begun recruiting for this event.

**Blue Catfish Video:** Mike Hutt is currently working with members of the industry, Virginia Tech, and VDACS on developing a video about Blue Catfish harvesting for marketing purposes. When Blue Catfish are more readily available Mike Hutt and a commercial waterman will go out to shoot this video. Mike Hutt is hoping to accomplish this early in spring of 2025.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2024 Franklin Fall Harvest Festival:** Held on September 28<sup>th</sup> in Franklin, VA. The VMPB provided 50 pounds of Blue Catfish fillets for the event. Mike Hutt met with the organizer of the event and delivered the Blue Catfish fillets to him. Mike received feedback that the Blue Catfish was well received and that the VMPB's support for this event was greatly appreciated.

**2024 SUSTA Activity Manager Training:** Owen Hynson informed the board members that he traveled to SUSTA headquarters in New Orleans between October 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> to attend this event. This event was an introductory training session for new SUSTA activity managers to prepare them for working with other co-activity managers, assisting members of their SUSTA pavilions, and preparing SUSTA reimbursement forms. Because Owen has previously traveled for SUSTA activities he was able to provide feedback to the instructors on SUSTA travel and assist other training attendees with questions about travel.

**Culinary Institute of Virginia, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** Mike Schwarz was heavily involved in setting up this event at the Culinary Institute of Virginia where the chefs in training competed to see who could prepare the best Blue Catfish dishes. Mike Hutt was one of the judges for this event. The Culinary Institute of Virginia would like to continue this event in the spring of 2025.

**VA Agriculture Trade Reception & Diner:** Mike Hutt attended this event on October 21<sup>st</sup> in Arlington highlighting VA Agriculture. Mike Hutt informed the board that there were many foreign dignitaries from D.C. at this event. Mike Hutt also informed the board that VDACS Commissioner Joe Guthrie and Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matt Lohr both gave speeches in which they noted the importance of Virginia's commercial seafood industry.

**Chesapeake Research Consortium Webinar:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he has been chosen to participate in this webinar on November 20<sup>th</sup>. Mike informed the board that he is currently working on a presentation to give on Blue Catfish for this event.

**Virginia Tech Bio Summit:** Johnathan van Senten told the other VMPB members that the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC is 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. Johnathan informed the other board members that they are currently focusing on Blue Catfish, but these findings will be useful in similar work on other seafood species. Mike Hutt will be attending this event.

**Shored Up Culinary Oyster Vocational Experience:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he will be in Newport News on December 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss the Virginia Oyster industry. Mike Hutt believes that attendance at this event is a mix of culinary students and general attendees.

**2025 VA Agribusiness Legislative Reception and Dinner:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he and Owen Hynson will be at the 2025 VA Agribusiness Reception serving oysters on behalf of the VMPB. J.C. Hudgins, Jimmy Hudgins, and Dan Knott will be attending this event from the Virginia Waterman's Association to shuck oysters, and the payment for this event will be going to Dan Knott's charity. Mike and Owen serve 900 oysters at this event yearly and the organizers have mentioned it is the highlight of the event every year. This event is being held on January 9<sup>th</sup> at the Main Street Station in Richmond.

**2025 SGVA Oyster Roast:** Mike Hutt informed the board that he talked with Kim Husky to let her know that he and Owen Hynson will be attending the 2025 Shellfish Growers of Virginia Oyster Roast on January 13<sup>th</sup> to help in any way needed. New Executive Director of the SGVA, Jordan Krevonick, was in attendance at the meeting so Mike reiterated to her that he and Owen will be there to support the SGVA during this event.

**Seafood Source 2025 Advertising Proposal:** Mike Hutt informed the board of an advertising proposal for Seafood Source in 2025 that includes advertising on Seafood Source News during the months of February & October and advertising in their North American Newsletter in the month of April or any month of our choice if available. Seafood Source will also continue to give the VMPB comp placements throughout the year when available. The total cost of this proposal is \$7,815.00. William Sexauer made a motion to approve this proposal. Terri Graham Wallace seconded the motion. After the motion discussion was held on this vote. After discussion a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexauer-Aye
- Chris Sopko-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Jonathan van Senten-Aye
- Michael Congrove-Aye

Eight Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

**Shelby White Blue Catfish Marketing Grant:** Shelby White informed the VMPB that VIMS is currently applying for a NOAA Saltonstall-Kennedy grant to use for Blue Catfish marketing opportunities. VIMS would like to partner with the VMPB, and an NGO in North Carolina named, NC Catch, on this project. The VMPB's role in this project would be to continue spreading awareness about Blue Catfish and if funding is approved to work with VIMS on developing a website like our Virginia Seafood and Virginia Oysters sites focused entirely on Blue Catfish and promotional material such as brochures, infographics, posters, etc. VIMS is also looking into hosting a symposium for all interested parties in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina on Blue Catfish. Mike Hutt signed a letter of support for this proposal.

**Clara Vaughn Blue Catfish Marketing Grant:** Mike Hutt informed the board that Clara Vaughn of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission informed him they are applying for a NOAA Saltonstall-Kennedy grant for approximately \$150,000.00. This grant if approved will focus on funding three special events in the middle peninsula. A chef's symposium at VIMS in 2026 with Blue Catfish as the featured species, a cooking competition for students with Blue Catfish as the key ingredient, and a Virginia Chefs Association learning session for chefs to visit a Blue Catfish processing operation and to speak with watermen harvesting the species. This grant would also fund the development of Blue Catfish marketing material including a brand or logo, promotional materials, a series of videos on cooking, harvesting, and the ecological impact of Blue Catfish, and the development of a standalone website for Blue Catfish. Mike Hutt signed a letter of support for this proposal.

## **INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS**

**VIMS** – Shelby White reported that VIMS is currently reviewing a new Shellfish Growers Survey for approval so that should be expected to send out to Aquaculture growers soon. On October 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> a shellfish enhancement event was held in Rhode Island that was attended by a group from VIMS. Shelby also informed the board that Virginia River Fisheries grant applications are currently available, watermen can apply for these, and up to \$100,000.00 in grants are awarded.

**Virginia Tech** – Jonathan informed the other board members that the VT Seafood AREC has three openings currently, a food safety engineering position, a research engineering position, and a position in communications. Johnathan informed the board that they hope to fill those positions soon. Johnathan also was reminded by Mike Schwarz to inform everyone that Amory Seafood was the recipient of the 2024 Blue Catfish processing grant for \$250,000.00 and that we should continue to support an increase in the amount of funds awarded for this grant every year. Johnathan also reminded the board that the 2025 Virginia Aquaculture Conference hosted by VIMS will be held in Newport News on November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**VMRC** – No report.

**Virginia Seafood Council** – No report.

**Virginia Waterman’s Association** – Dan Knott informed the board that the VWA is supporting Clara Vaughn on the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission Blue Catfish grant proposal. He also informed the board that the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission is looking for a 20-million-dollar infrastructure grant from the DOT for improvements to Virginia dockage to help support commercial watermen. There are 11 places in the Middle Peninsula they are currently looking at to improve. Dan also informed the board that the VWA crab steam in Reedville raised \$33,000.00 dollars and they are going to make this a yearly event. The VWA also was involved at an oyster shucking event at the Reedville Museum.

**Shellfish Growers of Virginia** – New Executive Director of the SGVA, Jordan Krevonick, reported to the board that she is excited to get to know everyone and to see how she can help support other members of the Virginia Seafood industry. Jordan mentioned that she went around with Mike Congrove to meet with Virginia aquaculture growers, Jordan also let Mike and Owen know that she would keep in contact with them about the upcoming SGVA oyster roast.

**Omega Protein** – Taylor Deihl reported to the board that both the Atlantic and Gulf Menhaden fisheries are MSC certified. The Marine Stewardship Council is going to work with Omega protein on how to better market this certification and creating a video on the Menhaden fishery and fish oil production.

**Cooperative Programs**

VDACS – No report.

**Financial Report**

Mike Hutt reported a carry over for FY 2024-2025 of \$662,178.74 and a balance of \$632,521.60 as of September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**PUBLIC COMMENT** - None

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

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 2:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Mike Hutt  
Executive Director

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Daniel Knott  
Co-Chair