



FINAL
VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)
Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday June 11, 2025/ 1:00 P.M.
VIMS, Davis Hall
Gloucester Point, VA

CALL TO ORDER: VMPB board chair Taylor Deihl called the meeting to order at 1:01 P.M. eight board members were present which represents a quorum.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Monica Schenemann
Taylor Deihl
Daniel Knott
William Sexauer
Beverly Ludford
Nathan Bussels
Terri Graham Wallace
Mike Congrove

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jonathan van Senten
Chris Sopko
Trey Sowers

STAFF PRESENT:

Mike Hutt, VMPB
Owen Hynson, VMPB

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jamie Green, Commissioner of VMRC
Kim Huskey, Cherrystone Aqua Farms
JC Hudgins, Virginia Waterman's Association
Mike Schwartz, Director of the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC
Fernando Gonsalves, Field researcher for the Virginia Tech Seafood AREC
Kara Canaday, Office of the Governor, Ombudsman for Tribal Consultation
Shelby White, VIMS

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:

Introduction of attendance at meeting.

Corrections:

The "Draft" needed to be removed from the header of the meeting agenda, the location needed to be changed from Waterman's Hall to Davis Hall, and the date of the 2026 Legislative Seafood Luncheon needed to be changed from January 26, 2026, to January 21, 2026

MINUTES:

Dan Knott made a motion to approve the minutes from March 4, 2025, William Sexauer seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Seafood Source News February 2025 Ads Activity Report: The total number of impressions as of the end of February 2025 in Seafood Source advertising was 752,553, the total number of clicks was 702, and the CTR was .09%. The VMPB was also given complimentary placement in the Weekly Global Newsletter during January, February, and March. The January numbers were 68,957 impressions, 70 clicks, and the CTR was .10%. The February numbers were 53,855 impressions, 70 clicks, and the CTR was .13%. The March numbers were 53,639 impressions, 139 clicks, and the CTR was .26%.

Undercurrent News March, April, May 2025 Ads Activity Report: The total number of impressions as of the end of May 2025 were 523,393 newsletters sent, 195 total clicks and the click through rate was .09%. The VMPB also received complimentary placement in the months of March and April during this period. The total number of impressions as of the end of May 2025 were 31,259 newsletters sent, 346 total clicks, and a click through rate of 2.71%.

NBC 12 News Ad Campaign Report: The VMPB ad campaign with NBC 12 News was scheduled to run from 11/1/24-1/31/25. NBC 12 did not reach the agreed upon number of placements during this period and offered to continue the ad campaign into February with no added cost to the VMPB. 66 fifteen seconded ads ran in February, 18 ads during Virginia Tech and UVA basketball games, 6 during ACC women's basketball games, and 42 ads ran during the NBC 12 local news programs. 26 of the ad spot run during this period were extra spots included by NBC 12 at no cost to the VMPB and had an extra added value of over \$1,900.00.

April 2025 Oyster FIP: As of the April 2025 update the current Oyster FIP has maintained it's A rating and is in compliance with Environmental reporting requirements and social reporting requirements.

SENA 2025: This trade show was held in Boston and took place from March 16-18, 2025. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event. There was a big increase in traffic at the VMPB booth this year compared to last year thanks to working out the catering situation with Levy and being able to sample our Blue Catfish fillets. The VMPB gathered 64 trade leads and received a lot of interest in Virginia Wild Blue Catfish, Clams, and Blue Crab.

SEG 2025: This trade show was held in Barcelona from May 6-8, 2025. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson attended this event on behalf of the VMPB as part of the SUSTA pavilion. Mike Hutt was a SUSTA co-activity manger for this event so SUSTA paid for the cost of his travel. Owen Hynson traveled under VMPB funds to help assist Mike with this event. 41 trade leads were gathered at this event.

VDACS Blue Catfish Harvesting Video: Mike Hutt is still working with VDACS and the VMRC on this project. He is currently looking to find a commercial waterman that would like to take part in this video showing Blue Catfish harvesting.

VDACS HOFEX Show: Mike Hutt was asked by VDACS to attend this expo that they were participating in from May 14-16, 2025, at no cost to the VMPB. Mike Hutt has been informed that VDACS is no longer participating in this event so the VMPBs involvement has ended as well. VDACS would like to participate in this event in 2026.

VDACS Inbound Trade Mission from China & Canada: VDACS was working on putting together a trade mission for buyers from China & Canada interested in the Virginia Seafood industry. Mike Hutt was looking into potential seafood industry companies to take buyers to once he had date and attendance confirmation from VDACS. Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS has postponed this mission for now but if they move forward with this in the future, he will take part.

SUSTA Hong Kong Inbound Buyers Mission: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS will be working with Mike Hutt, Owen Hynson, and Maryland's SUSTA members on a SUSTA sponsored inbound mission of buyers from Hong Kong in October of 2025. This mission would be a joint effort by Virginia and Maryland's SUSTA teams and will involve tours of both Virginia and Maryland's seafood industries. Mike Hutt will know more about dates of this event and planned stops once it gets closer to the tour date.

VDACS Catfish Website: Mike Hutt informed the board that VDACS is working on a website about Virginia Wild Caught Blue Catfish. VDACS will be handling the cost of creating and maintaining the website and has asked the VMPB for help when needed on content for the website. Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB has provided VDACS with pictures, recipes, and videos for the website but has not received a timeline line yet for when it will be completed. Mike Hutt will reach back out to VDACS and see if there are any updates from them.

SEA 2025: Seafood Expo Asia will take place in Singapore from September 10-12, 2025. Mike Hutt informed the board that he would be traveling on behalf of the VMPB as one of the co-activity mangers for the SUSTA pavilion. SUSTA will pay for the cost of Mike's travel. Mike also informed the board there are currently five companies seriously considering signing on to this show including one Virginia company. Three companies have verbally agreed to attend, and one company is currently in the process of signing up. Once SUSTA has the required number of companies sign up Mike will be able to turn in his travel request to the state.

NEW BUSINESS

Economic Impact Study Phase 2 Update: Fernando Goncalves gave the board an update on Phase 2 of the Economic Impact Study. Fernando explained to the board the difficulties of getting accurate defensible numbers for the retail and restaurant sectors of the Virginia Seafood industry. Fernando explained that the numbers that results that went into the retail and restaurant portion show how much of an impact that Virginia Seafood has on Virginia's retail stores and restaurants leading to hundreds of millions in sales and creating thousands of jobs. These numbers cannot be added to the updated total economic impact of the Virginia Seafood industry which is now over 1.25 billion dollars because this data would be double counted in the total. The two data sets can be used to show the strength of the Virginia Seafood industry, its growth from 2019, and how much of a positive impact that it has on Virginia's retail stores and restaurants.

VDACS Blue Catfish Work Group: Mike Schwarz gave the board an update on the VDACS Blue Catfish work group. He explained that Virginia House Bill 1135 established the creation of this work group to develop a significant commercial market for Blue Catfish. The work group has met three times a fourth meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2025, at the VMRC office in Fort Monroe. Mike informed the board that now around 70% of the Blue Catfish is waste after processing. The work group is looking into ways to use the discarded waste in value added products such as make up, fish oil pills, and fish cakes. Their thinking is if processors are able to make up some profit on what once was waste material they will then be able to lower the price point on fillets to a level that large volume retailers will be interested. The work group will also be recommending removing Wild Caught Blue Catfish from USDA regulation and back under FDA regulation.

EU Shellfish Update: Kim Husky informed the board that Mike Hutt, Danielle Schools, from the VDH, and herself have been looking into getting Virginia onto the list of states that are allowed to ship shellfish to the EU. On June 11, 2025, they attended a virtual call with members of NOAA and FAS to discuss this issue. They highlighted the number of trade leads that Mike had received from European companies at SEG the past few looking for Virginia shellfish once the ban is lifted. Virginia is on the oyster ban list because it is among the states flagged for dermo and msx cases, but Virginia has significantly less cases of these than the other states flagged for this. After this discussion they decided that going forward they would send a formal request to be removed from the list of states banned from shipping clams to the EU and once that has been approved, they will restate the case for why Virginia oysters should be removed from the banned list as well. Independent of their efforts Kim also informed the board that an Executive Order was signed on 4/21/25 to make lifting the ban on shipping US shellfish to the EU a priority.

2025 Northeast Nonmetropolitan Area Oyster Shucking Prevailing Wage Survey: Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB conducted a oyster shucking prevailing wage survey for the Northeast Virginia Nonmetropolitan area for wages from the dates February 15, 2024, to February 14, 2025. This survey was sent to all 39 certified oyster shucking locations in this area, and they had 4 responses. The prevailing wage that was collected was \$14.40 per hour. The results of this survey were sent back out to the respondents on March 24, 2025.

2025 Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, VA-NC MSA Crab Picking Wage Survey:

Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB is currently in the process of conducting a wage survey on Blue Crabs for the Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, VA-NC MSA. The dates from this survey are to run from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. This survey will be sent out to certified crab picking plants in the msa on July 1, 2025.

SUSTA Spring Conference: The SUSTA spring conference was held between April 7-9, 2025, in New Orleans. Mike Hutt attended the conference on behalf of the VMPB. Mike Hutt met with SUSTA's in region consultants and looked for areas of interest with Virginia's seafood products. Mike Hutt also met with other SUSTA co-activity managers to see if there were any potential marketing opportunities to collaborate on. SUSTA paid for the cost of Mike's travel for this trip.

SUSTA Blue Catfish Promotion: Mike Hutt informed the board that while he is on travel for SEA 25 SUSTA will also have a Blue Catfish promotion in Singapore one of the nights after the show. This event will involve local chefs and retail stores. Stone Slade, co-activity manager from Maryland, will be working with Mike on this event.

VMPB Advertising Proposals: Mike Hutt informed the board that the VMPB had six advertising proposals from Adams, Lamar, ABC 13 News, NBC 12 News, Seafood Source, and Undercurrent News. William Sexauer made a motion for Mike Hutt to approve of the VMPB's advertising proposals as he see fit up to \$55,000.00, Beverly Ludford seconded the motion, and discussion was held. During discussion the board recommended amending the amount that is to be spent up to be \$50,000.00 instead. The board also discussed looking into using some of their future advertising budget for hiring a social media influencer and/or boosting social media posts. William Sexauer amended his motion for Mike Hutt to approve of the VMPB's advertising proposals as he see fit up to \$50,000.00, Beverly Ludford seconded the motion, and a roll call vote was held.

- William Sexauer-Aye
- Taylor Deihl-Aye
- Daniel Knott-Aye
- Beverly Ludford-Aye
- Mike Congrove-Aye
- Nathan Bussels-Aye
- Terri Graham Wallace-Aye
- Monica Schenemann-Aye

Eight Ayes and the motion passed unanimously.

INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS

VIMS – Shelby White informed the board that she will be willing to collaborate with Mike and Owen on marketing efforts when possible. The VA Aquaculture Conference will be held from November 14-15, 2025, in Newport News. Mike Hutt and Owen Hynson informed the board that they will be attending this event on behalf of the VMPB and will have a booth handing out educational material and registering people in the VMPB aquaculture directory. Shelby also showed the board a design for a cloth with the logo for the catfish grant that she is working on with the VMRC. They are currently developing cloths and cards that will lead to the VMRC Blue Catfish website and the VMPB's websites.

Virginia Tech – No report.

VMRC – No report.

Virginia Seafood Council – No report.

Virginia Waterman's Association – JC Hudgins informed the board that the spring oyster season that ended in April was one of the best in recent years. The spring crab season was also good, but the crab numbers are down and prices on bait and crab pot wire are up. There is a crab stock assessment coming up in 2026 this will determine how the fishery adjusts going forward. JC and other members of the VWA went to Kellums Seafood on May 8, 2025, to meet with Delegate Spamburger. JC and other members of the VWA attended the CMAC meeting on May 29, 2025, to give their opinions on the upcoming vote on mandating turtle excluders in crab pots. This is seen as very costly by the VWA and does not address the issue of habitat management, the vote for this will be held on June 24, 2025. The VWA sponsored the Yorktown Workboat Races on June 1, the Reedville Workboat Races on June 7, and will be sponsoring the Matthews Workboat Races on July 5. JC informed the board the state delegate Hillary Pugh Kent will be sponsoring the Blue Catfish Tournament at Leedstown campground on August 2, 2025. JC also informed the board that the VWA had recently added 8 new members.

Shellfish Growers of Virginia – Kim Husky informed the board that the SGA had a booth at the Chincoteague Seafood festival where they handed out t shirts and shucked oysters for attendees. Kim informed the board that she was at the May 8, 2025, meeting at Kellum Seafood for Delegate Spamburger as well.

Omega Protein – Taylor Deihl informed the board that Omega Protein's Menhaden season had recently begun.

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 \$455,574.12 as of April 30th, 2025.

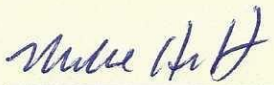
PUBLIC COMMENT – Kara Canaday: The Upper Mattaponi Tribe has been doing a lot of work with the VCU Rice Center on restoring the juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon population in their area. On May 17, 2025, they provided an update that so far, they had caught five juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon on the James River. It had been five years since the last juvenile Atlantic Sturgeon was caught. The Nansemond Indian Nation has done a lot of oyster restoration in the Tidewater region and the Upper Mattaponi Tribe is also doing work in oyster restoration in their area. Kara handed contact cards out to the board members incase there are any project they would like to collaborate on. Mike Hutt informed the board that he had a member of the Upper Mattaponi Tribe reach out to him as they are interested in processing Blue Catfish and wanted to know about the USDA regulations, Mike Hutt passed their information along to the proper people to talk to.

TRAVEL – The Board may request travel reimbursement.

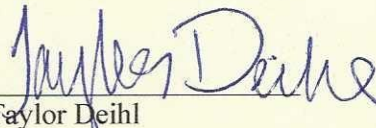
ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Hutt
Executive Director



Taylor Deihl
Chair