



Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council

CRMC BioSecurity Board
4808 Tower Hill Rd.
Wakefield, RI 02879

February 1, 2006
3:00 pm

Agenda

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) North Cape proposal to import clams that have been raised in a nursery setting in either Long Island or SE Massachusetts.
- 3) Dale has proposed the following question: What limitations should we place on seed shellfish that are infected with a specific disease in terms of moving them to areas that already have a history of the disease at the new location? Specifically, if we have a lot of seed oysters that have a low level of infection of dermo, is there any good reason to deny allowing the seed to be moved into an area that is currently demonstrating an on-going level of dermo?
- 4) The previous question also brings up the question of testing for seed importation for diseases that are currently endemic. Is it still necessary?
- 5) Funding for disease surveys, especially if we are considering basing our regulations on the history of disease at particular sites.
- 6) In light of new applications for fresh water aquaculture what changes, if any, do we need to consider to the regulatory structure?
- 7) Adjourn



Members

present

Dr. Chris Hannifin, State Veterinarian, DEM Division of Agriculture;
Dr. Dale Leavitt, Professor, Roger Williams University;
Dr. Robert Rheault, Ocean State Aquaculture Association;
Dr. Marta Gomez-Chiarri, Associate Professor, University of Rhode Island;
Mr. Najih Lazar, DEM Division of Marine Fisheries;
Mr. Mike McGiveney, President Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association;
Mr. David Alves, Chair, CRMC Aquaculture & Fisheries Coordinator.

Others Present

Dr. Boze Hancock, Coordinator
North Cape Shellfish Restoration Program NOAA Restoration Center, at NMFS

Call to order. Mr. Alves called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm.

Mr. Alves opened the meeting with a brief statement stating that the CRMC BioSecurity Board meeting is open to the public, but it is not a public hearing. Therefore discussion is open to the members of the board and to others at the chair's discretion. The CRMC BioSecurity Board is an advisory board to the Council concerning matters of aquatic diseases, genetically modified organisms, importation of non-indigenous species and other management issues necessary to protecting cultured and wild aquatic species.

Mr. Alves thanked the board members for attending. Since members attend from various localities all over the state there will be an effort to rotate the meetings between members work locations in the future.



Item 2: North Cape proposal to import clams that have been raised in a nursery setting in either Long Island or SE Massachusetts.

Mr. Alves asked Dr. Hancock to give a brief overview of the work the *North Cape* project up to this point. Mr. Alves complimented Dr. Hancock on the notable successes he has achieved and noted that the board was very supportive of his efforts.

Dr. Hancock then gave a brief description of his proposal to import large (15 mm) hard clam seed from hatchery and field nursery sites in SE Massachusetts and Long Island NY. Past efforts at raising clams to this size in state using *North Cape* personnel have met with issues concerning labor efforts and Dr. Hancock and his overseeing board believes it would be more cost effective to contract this effort to private industry. The choice of sites in Massachusetts and Long Island are a result of an RFP being issued for this work.

Discussion of board members mentioned that the only issue with bringing in large seed would be the clam disease QPX. Currently QPX is only found in one location in Rhode Island, Winnapaug Pond. Infection at that location may be the result of seed being imported from southern states that was especially susceptible to QPX. Further discussion on the state of knowledge concerning this disease brought up the fact that there is much that is not known about it, but it has not been detected is small seed coming from a hatchery setting. The amount of infection also seems to be related to density of the animals and the amount of stress the animals are subject to.

Mr. Lazar stated that the state requires a disease free certificate to allow imports of seed and asked if the Board should require, in this case, a larger sample for histology testing? Discussion followed on the problems of conducting histology on larger animals and how the detection of animals with low levels of infection is much more difficult, thus more likely to let diseased animals enter. Dr. Gomez-Chiarri stated that the OIE protocols suggested not bring in animals from areas where disease is endemic. Dr. Leavitt stated that source of broodstock and field nursery areas are also important. The discussions participants agreed that importing small seed, 1-5 mm, is not the problem, the issue here is the field nursery stage.

Dr. Rheault suggested that no seed from hatcheries which are located in areas where QPX is endemic should be allowed in RI. Dr. Hancock suggested that if local growers could be found to grow the seed for the project would there be an issue with moving seed from these grower's farms to the salt ponds? Since QPX has not been detected in RI except in one pond that moving

seed shouldn't be
Leavitt proposed
encourage local



an issue. Dr.
that we should
nursery systems;

this would minimize the disease issue and bring economic benefit. He also asked why stock couldn't be transplanted from the Providence River to the ponds. This would create a spawner sanctuary of large animals that would quickly add to the recruitment in the ponds. Mr. Lazar stated that the trustees of the *North Cape* restoration project didn't think that this would add to the overall biomass in RI. The NOAA representatives have objected in the past to transplants as a mean for restoration under the assumption that moving quahogs within the state boundaries does not qualify as an addition to the biomass. The discussion then centered on the issue of decreasing density in the providence River where stock is very abundant would quickly be filled, and the over all effect would be to increase density in the ponds where an increase of biomass is needed. Dr. Gomez-Chiarri stated that disease data for the Providence River is lacking. Dr. Leavitt stated that QPX has not spread slowly, but jumped from area to area, reason is unknown. Dr. Hancock stated that in effect we don't know where the disease is. Mr. McGiveney stressed the need to be careful as RI has a healthy wild population and we do not want to jeopardize this resource. All seconded this thought. Dr. Gomez-Chiarri suggested that where possible it would be better to field nursery stock near where they were slated to be planted.

Mr. Alves moved the board vote on the following proposal: That the CRMC BioSecurity Board not permit field nursery clams to be imported into Rhode Island. The board would continue the practice of allowing seed size up to 5mm from shellfish hatcheries in located in areas with no known QPX infestations. The board would also continue the practice of requiring a pathology report before seed could be imported.

Mr. McGiveney seconded the motion. All in attendance voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 3: What limitations should we place on seed shellfish that are infected with a specific disease in terms of moving them to areas that already have a history of the disease at the new location? Specifically, if we have a lot of seed oysters that have a low level of infection of dermo, is there any good reason to deny allowing the seed to be moved into an area that is currently demonstrating an on-going level of dermo?

Dr. Leavitt explained his rational in proposing this agenda item. Dr. Rheault stated that Connecticut and New York have no restrictions on seed movement within the state. Dr. Gomez-

Chiari stated different have differing virulence and does not between the Leavitt agreed



that there are strains that may levels of the present testing differentiate strains. Dr. and told the group

that Dr. Smolowitz in Woods Hole has found 2-3 strains in the north east. Dr. Gomez-Chiari stated that you can find populations of oysters that have very high levels of dermo that seem to be doing fine, is this a result of differing strains? Dr. Leavitt suggested that continued movement of animals with in the state continued to be approved with the present protocol of requiring testing before movement is approved. Dr. Gomez-Chiari stated that Dermo is endemic in RI while MSX is only in a few locations. Dr. Hannifin suggested that if there are not native strains found in RI then not moving populations around the state would be suggested.

Mr. Alves moved the board vote on the following motion: The movement of shellfish stocks within the state would be considered in light of past shellfish disease survey data. If the proposed movement is denied the applicant can have the stocks proposed to be moved tested at their expense, the BioSecurity Board will then reconsider the proposal using the new data. Dr. Rheault seconded the motion. All in attendance voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 4: The previous question also brings up the question of testing for seed importation for diseases that are currently endemic. Is it still necessary?

Mr. Alves explained why he had added this to the agenda. He also stated that in light of previous discussion on the first items on the agenda he say no reason to continue any discussion of this item. All agreed that the protocols currently in place should be continued.

Item 5: Funding for disease surveys, especially if we are considering basing our regulations on the history of disease at particular sites.

Dr. Gomez-Chiari explained that her laboratory has been conducting the shellfish disease survey for the past few years. Financial support has come from DEM Fish & Wildlife, with the Rhode Island Aquaculture Initiative providing funding when DEM didn't fund the survey. Having such uncertainty in financial support from the state has made it difficult to plan for the long term. She

long term. She
be more cost
long term funding
would allow for
planning which
reduce the costs.
stressed the
information on
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believes it would
effective to have
assured which
long term
would in turn
Mr. Alves
requirement for
disease needs to
available to

resource managers, how can you make informed decisions concern this resource if you don't have information to base the decisions on? Dr. Gomez-Chiarri stated that she doesn't need to be the person conducting the survey, but it needs to be done and the information needs to be available to resource managers. Mr. McGiveney asked if Dr. Gomez-Chiarri would serve as the point person for the information even

if she didn't do the survey. Dr. Gomez-Chiarri replied she would be glad to do this. The important point was that the survey be funded.

Mr. Lazar explained that there was not a budget item for the shellfish survey in the Division of Fish and Wildlife FY06. Funding for the survey depended on other projects being funded first and if there was any money left it might get funded. Mr. Lazar said that the DEM supports the survey and will continue to collect samples for Dr Gomez-Chiarri and asked that Dr Gomez Chiarri submit her proposal to DEM for consideration. The general consensus was that the shellfish disease survey is important and deserves to be funded on a long term basis. The shellfish industry, both wild harvest and cultured, are important resources to the state and as the investment needed for the shellfish disease survey is small it makes no sense for the state not to fund it. Dr. Rheault moved the board write letters urging support for long term funding of the survey to the Governor, DEM Director, CRMC Director, legislative leaders, the Marine Fisheries Council and others who might be able to secure funding. Dr. Leavitt seconded the motion. All in attendance voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved unanimously.

Item 6: In light of new applications for fresh water aquaculture what changes, if any, do we need to consider to the regulatory structure?

Mr. Alves explained to the board that there were two proposals that would entail growing freshwater fishes in the works. He went on to outline the protocols used in the past of polling the membership and asking outside experts for their expertise on a case-by-case basis as the proposals came in. His question is does the board need to consider further protocols to enable it

to address these types of proposals in the future. After discussion it was decided that continuing to handle these proposals on a case-by-case basis is fine for now. No changes were necessary as the existing protocols left the greatest scope to encompass future possibilities.

Mr. Alves moved we adjourn the meeting, Mr. Rheault seconded the motion. All in attendance voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:50 P.M.

DRAFT