



Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council

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

July 19th, 2007
3:30 pm
URI Woodward Hall, Room 115

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

Dr. Marta Gomez-Chiarri, University of Rhode Island;
Dr. Dale Leavitt, Roger Williams University;
Mr. Mike McGiveney, Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association;
Dr. Robert Rheault, Ocean State Aquaculture Association;
Mr. David Alves, chair, CRMC

Guests Present:

Dr. Boze Hancock, NOAA/DEM *North Cape* restoration coordinator

Call to order. Mr. Alves called the meeting to order at 3:45 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.

Approval of February meeting minutes: Marta moved to approve, Dale seconded. This was approved by a unanimous vote.

New Business

Marta stated that there seems to be great interest in scallop restoration projects, they are currently efforts underway in Jamestown, Block Island and the salt ponds. There is the potential for spread of disease and the BioSecurity board should be aware of and working to ensure that these projects are conducted in such a way that addresses aquatic disease concerns.

This led to a discussion on the issue of clam importation for restoration efforts on Block Island without any disease issues being considered. The board asked Mr. Alves to update them on the issue. Mr. Alves related how a member of the BI Shellfish Commission during a discussion on an unrelated subject informed him about the importation of adult clams from Massachusetts into BI waters. Mr. Alves asked if the clams were tested for disease, and was informed they were not. Mr. Alves asked if the BI commission had received permission for any official entity to import these clams and was informed Mr. Dennis Erkan of the DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife had given them written permission. Mr. Alves then related to the board how he had informed the commission member that Massachusetts had the clam disease QPX, and that RI did not and it was not a good idea for the commission to import any adult clams from Massachusetts. It was also explained to the commission member that the CRMC BioSecurity Board did not have any authority to regulate the importation of any aquatic organisms for any purpose except aquaculture.

This led into a discussion on the authority of the BioSecurity Board and a question on why the board did not have authority to review any importation of aquatic bio materials. Mr. Alves informed the board that the legislation forming the board made the board advisory to the Coastal Council only. The board has assisted DEM in answering a particular disease question, but this was due to both the department's lack of expertise and to their need for political cover in the fact they did not want to make a decision on the matter at hand. The board can only advise other agencies if they request the assistance and the board agrees to help.

The board expressed the need for an oversight body to review all importation of aquatic organisms into RI waters. This was followed by a discussion of the problems caused by movement of clams in Raritan Bay in New York where a transplant program was carried out without prior testing. This resulted in a massive QPX outbreak which left the wild harvesters without any product to harvest. We certainly do not want a comparable situation here in RI. Fortunately Marta has been asked by DEM to test animals before the transplant this year. This testing has been requested every year before the clam transplant. While the situation might not arise, why take the chance considering the low cost of the testing compared to a possible disease outbreak. The next question was how to accomplish an expanded authority to oversee aquatic disease issues could be accomplished. All members present agree that a strong monitoring

program is necessary to making any informed resource management decisions. To expand the CRMC BioSecurity Board would take legislative action. Plus the consideration of such a move must include the state of interagency relations. Plus there is some oversight of aquatic imports. The DEM Division of Agriculture has purview over pet stores and the importation of plants and animals into them.

There was strong agreement on the following issues:

- 1) That expertise and experience to be gained from the participation from the state veterinarian is needed.
- 2) That DEM Division of Fish & Wildlife needs to have their representative attend these meetings since so much of what we discuss is pertinent to their efforts.
- 3) That materials outlining the issues need to be developed and distributed to interested parties. Dr.'s Leavitt and Gomez-Chiarri along with the assistance of Mr. Alves will work on this.

It was agreed upon that this discussion was at a dead end without the participation of DEM and the discussion would be continued at the next BioSecurity Board meeting. In the meantime the group would urge participation by all pertinent members of the Board.

The discussion then verged into the original issue of scallop movement. The question was raised of why we advise on this restoration when the board doesn't see other restoration plans. This is due to Dr. Hancock's method of operation which requires putting gear in the water and his diligence in obtaining the permits required from the CRMC.

The discussion then verged towards a concern for all life stages of the animal. There was a question about diseases of the animal which ended up with the opinion that the diseases of the animal were not well known or agreed upon by all pathologists. The issue also included the animals coming from areas where diseases of other animals, especially clams and oysters, were present and the fact that adult scallops moved from these areas could harbor disease organisms.

It was noted that Dr. Gomez-Chiarri will monitor wild populations as part of her regular disease testing program. It was noted that historically the state has a history of moving shellfish seed and adults around.

Dr. Hancock outlined his plan to grow seed out in Potters Pond and then move the juveniles to various restoration sites around the state. Two sites in the works now are on Jamestown and Block Island. A discussion followed on the proposal and it was agreed that there were three areas of concern: Disease, exotic introduction and genetics.

- 1) Disease: movement of juvenile scallops will follow the methodology we currently use for oysters. If the movement is within the same body of water that the juveniles were raised in there will be no issues. If the proposed movement is between bodies of water there will be a more stringent methodology and histopathology of the animals will be required before movement will be allowed. Adult or large juvenile scallops can be moved with a required disease/pathology

report or health certificate.

2) Exotics: Invasive species is probably beyond the purview of this body. We do already have a methodology required for importation of shellfish seed for aquaculture purposes that requires a cleaning of the animals to minimize the possibility of exotic hitchhikers being included with the seed. This is an area where the board should be in contact with the Aquatic Invasives program under way at CRMC. Dr. Gomez-Chiarri and Mr. Alves are working with this group. All agreed that this interaction should continue.

3) Genetics: This is the big unknown. It is generally believed that the broodstock used in the hatchery is wild stock. There are hatchery's working on selective breeding programs, but to change the animals enough to make genetics a factor will take generations. The board agreed an advisory opinion to try to maintain genetic diversity.

As far as juvenile scallop movement is concerned the same methodology will be used as outlined above. The question arose as to what we do if we see QPX, MSX and/or SSO in the path report and the resounding response was the seed will not be allowed to be imported or moved around the state if it is already in the state's waters. Dermo is not as big a concern since it is found in many locations around the state already.

The last part of the discussion noted that the group supports the CRMC aquatic invasive species group efforts and would like to see closer coordination between the groups.

A motion to adjourn was made by Dr. Leavitt, seconded by Mr. McGiveney, and unanimously passed.