

# Clam Industry Task Force Meeting – February 8, 2007

## Notice of Meeting

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture announces a meeting of the Clam Industry Task Force to which all interested persons are invited.

Date: Thursday, February 8, 2007

Time: 11:00 am to 1:30 pm

Place: Cedar Key Community Center  
809 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cedar Key, Florida

Purpose: To discuss issues affecting the Florida Clam Industry.  
A copy of the agenda can be obtained by contacting Rachelle Coleman at 1203 Governors Square Boulevard, Fifth Floor, Tallahassee, FL 32301, (850) 488-4033.

## Meeting Agenda

### **AGENDA**

#### **Clam Industry Task Force Meeting**

**Meeting:** February 8, 2007  
**Time:** 11:00 am-1:30 pm  
**Location:** Cedar Key Community Center  
809 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cedar Key, Florida

- I. 11:00 am Welcome
- II. Minutes
- III. Updates
  - i. Lease Fees
  - ii. BMP Manual
  - iii. Hurricane Cleanup Contracts
- IV. Department of Health Regulations for Wells
- V. 12:15 pm-12:30 pm 15 min Break
- VI. Do we need a new BMP for clam seed that is produced out-of- state?
- VII. Closing of Harbor Branch's Clam Hatchery
- VIII. Next Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Draft Minutes  
Clam Industry Task Force Meeting  
Cedar Key Community Center  
February 8, 2007

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was chaired by Sue Colson, who opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and presided over the agenda and discussions. The meeting was called to order at 11:05 am.

Members and guests introduced themselves. The following persons were in attendance.

Members Present

Sue Colson	Bill Lartz
Rose Cantwell	Tony Heeb
Rick Viele	Charles Sembler
Mike Hodges	Joe Weissman
Dan Salano	
Chris Topping	

Members Absent

Bill Leeming	Dan Leonard
Ricky Cooke	

Ex Officio

Leslie Sturmer	Mark Berrigan
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Guests

See Attached List

II. Minutes

The Minutes of the November 17, 2006 Clam Industry Task Force meeting in Brandon, Florida were reviewed and accepted (Motion by Mike Hodges, second by Charles Sembler).

III. Industry Updates

Lease Fees

Mark Berrigan, DACS, provided an update on the most recent Board of Trustees action regarding aquaculture lease fees. He reported that the Governor and the Cabinet met on January 19, 2007 and directed the Department to retain the current rates for lease fees for aquaculture leases. This action rescinded any previously discussed plans to increase lease fees in 2007.

## BMP Manual

Mark Berrigan, DACS, provided an update on the newly amended BMP Manual. He reported that the manual had been amended to include best management practices for net pen aquaculture. The manual was reviewed by the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee and sent back for correction. The Department is re-noticing the changes and the revised manual is anticipated to be available in two months.

## Hurricane Cleanup Contracts

Rose Cantwell, Cedar Key Aquaculture Association, provided an overview of the CKAA's responsibilities and actions related to the associations contact with DACS. The CKAA has entered into a contract with DACS to be the primary contactor for providing services to assist clam farmers on the west coast. In this role the CKAA will develop a scope of services which will include two funding categories; funding to assist clam hatcheries and funding to assist clam farmers. Several regional issues related to scope of services were discussed, including: developing lists for the numbers and types of markers and signs needed in each region; developing regional assessments for the level of cleanup activities needed in each region; and the derelict bag removal project.

Representatives from the Levy County Soil and Water District agreed to enter into a contract with the CKAA to administer the derelict bag removal project in Levy County. The LCSWD would implement a payment mechanism to pay sub-contractors that removed derelict bags from participating leases. Leslie Sturmer provided information pertaining to the derelict bag removal project, including a project update, project objectives, applications and guidelines for sub-contractors, and participation by leaseholders.

The criteria for providing funds to hatchery operators were discussed. The task force recommended that the CKAA send a letter to all prospective hatchery participants and outline the proposed funding; specifying that the project would provide reimbursement for qualified expenditures. Qualified expenditures would include equipment and structures that are related to improving hatchery production that were paid for within a determined time frame. Qualified expenditures would not include items such as labor, fuel, electricity, or expenditures which had been previously reimbursed during other assistance programs. Funds would be allocated on an equal basis, which would include a maximum cap on funds allotted to each participant.

The task force requested that the DOA provide a list of the CLAMMRS station locations and establish a priority ranking for the times when each station is brought on-line (Moved by Chris Topping and seconded by Charles Sembler).

The task force agreed to request information from the Office of Agriculture Law Enforcement (OALE) regarding the use of the funds allocated from the clam assistance program. They would like to receive confirmation about how the funds will or have been spent. Bob Johnson was identified as the OALE contact.

## IV. Department of Health Regulations for Wells

Chris Topping, CKAA, provided an overview of the issue related to plans to supply well water to the company's new processing facility. During the local permitting process, issues related to the

water supply system were identified. Subsequently, these water supply issues were determined to potentially impact other shellfish processing operations that used wells for their water supplies.

Bob Vincent, Florida Department of Health, introduced local and state health departments' representatives that were available to provide information relating to this water use systems. He provided an overview of the DOH responsibilities and regulatory authority over specific water supply systems. In the present situation, the DOH is responsible for regulating limited use public water systems, the type of supply system required for most small commercial operations (shellfish processors). The program is administered at the local level by county health departments. Mr. Vincent provided a handout that explained Limited Use Commercial Public Water Systems, water system classifications, checklists for various water systems, and applications for operating permits. He also discussed options for complying with the DOH's regulations.

Task force members and guests discussed the ramifications of the DOH's regulations for water supply systems. Pertinent points included: duplication of efforts by DACS and DOH inspections; burden of duplicative water samples; the need for additional regulation when facilities have been operating under very stringent regulatory framework for a long time with public health problems, and the economic consequences of having to retrofit existing wells or discontinue operations. The task force moved to request that DACS assist the affected businesses by working with the DOH to develop alternative solutions (regulations) to eliminate the overlapping responsibilities, eliminate the duplicative regulations, and seek statutory changes to make DACS solely responsible for regulating shellfish processing facilities (Moved by Dan Salano, seconded by Joe Wiessman). The task force also requested that Dan Salano inform the Aquaculture Review Council (ARC) and the Florida Aquaculture Association (FAA) about the current situation. The recommendation included the direction that the ARC should develop an issue of concern to be presented to the Aquaculture Interagency Coordinating Council (AICC).

#### VI. BMP for Clam Seed Produced Out of State

There was little discussion concerning this item, as well as, confusion about why it was on the agenda. Since, DACS can not regulate out-of-state hatcheries under its BMP program, it would be left to clam businesses to develop guidelines (safeguards) for purchasing and importing out-of-state seed stocks. There are currently provisions in the BMPs and in lease agreements that regulate the use of imported seed stocks. It was generally agreed that nothing needed to be done at this time on this item, since any action that might impede the movement of seed stocks into the state would be detrimental for clam businesses.

#### VII. Closing of Harbor Branch's Clam Hatchery

Joe Weissman provided a review of the events leading up to the recent decision to close the clam hatchery at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute (HBOI). Both the hatchery unit at Harbor Branch and the Sea-Ag hatchery facility will be affected by the decision, and production could be discontinued by April 2007. Leslie Sturmer provided a summary of seed production, and reported that about 30% of seed production is from HBOI. Several possible alternatives for continuing production at HBOI were discussed. It was generally agreed that seed production from HBOI was critical to sustaining clam farming businesses in the short term, and that smaller farmers would find it more difficult to obtain seed stocks if production stops at HBOI. Possible alternative solutions to maintaining (extending) production at HBOI included: Harbor Branch

reconsidering their position regarding closing the hatcheries, the future positive involvement by Florida Atlantic University, and leasing the facilities to private businesses. There was general agreement that continuing seed production at Harbor Branch should be a priority for the task force. There was a motion to write a letter to the Board of Directors at Harbor Branch to request a meeting between the Board and task force members and clam farmers to discuss the situation (Motion Chris Topping, second Mike Hodges). The task force also supported requesting that Harbor Branch extend the lease contract with Sea Ag on the HBOI property

#### VIII. Next Meeting

The next meeting was tentatively planned for Tallahassee, to coincide with other aquaculture-related activities which are scheduled around March 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. Potential items for discussion included: status reports on the situation at Harbor Branch, the DOH well item, and the clam assistance contract.

#### IX. Adjourn Meeting

The task force meeting was adjourned at 1:55 pm.