

Clam Industry Task Force Meeting – June 11, 2008

Notice of Meeting

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture announces a meeting of the Clam Industry Task Force.

Date: Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Time: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Place: Captain Hiram's Resort
1580 US Highway 1
Sebastian, FL, 3295

Please submit agenda items to Mark Berrigan by May 28, 2008.

The draft meeting minutes from the March 18, 2008, meeting and the agenda for the June 11, 2008, meeting will be mailed out on May 30, 2008.

Meeting Agenda

AGENDA **Clam Industry Task Force Meeting**

Meeting: June 11, 2008
Time: 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
Location: Captain Hiram's Resort
1580 US Highway 1
Sebastian, FL 32958

- I. Welcome
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Approval of Agenda
- IV. Introduction New Ag-Law Officer
Discussion about Security Issues
- V. Updates
 - i. Franklin County
 - ii. Cedar Key
 - iii. Charlotte County Area
 - iv. East Coast
 - v. Extension Update
 - vi. Marketing
 - vii. Chapter 18-21, F.A.C.

- viii. Legislation
- VI. 2007 Florida Aquaculture Survey
- VII. Task Force's Membership
- VIII. Public Comment
- IX. Next Meeting-Agenda for Security Issue
- X. Adjourn Clam Industry Task Force Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Minutes as Approved
 Clam Industry Task Force Meeting
 Captain Hiram's Resort
 Sebastian, Florida
 June 11, 2008

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was chaired by Charles Sembler, who opened the meeting, welcomed attendees and presided over the agenda and discussions. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

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

Members Present

Dan Leonard	Bill Lartz	Chris Topping
Charles D. Sembler	Sue Colson	Rose Cantwell
Mike Hodges	Bill Leeming	

Members Absent

Joe Weissman	Tony Heeb	Rick Viele
Ricky Cooke	Dan Solano	

Ex Officio

Leslie Sturmer	Mark Berrigan	Darlene Snider
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Guests

Sherman James (Ag-Law)	Curt Hemmel	Tom McCrudden
Steve Woodford	Jim Egan	

II. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the March 18, 2008 Clam Industry Task Force meeting was approved and accepted without amendments.

III. Approval of Agenda

The agenda for the Clam Industry Task Force Meeting on June 11, 2008 was accepted without objection.

IV Introduction of Sherman James, new Ag-Law Officer.

Sherman James was introduced to the CITF members. Officer James will be stationed in Cedar Key. Officer James addressed the members relating to his responsibilities and his commitment to serve the clam farming and aquaculture industry. Officer James led discussions regarding security issues and efforts to improve lease security and anti-theft operations. He also identified several actions that might facilitate law enforcement efforts, including: developing an e-mail alert system; improving access to the Division of Aquaculture's lease and certification data files; increasing the amounts paid for information leading to arrests and convictions of perpetrators; standardizing office training, and improving cooperation with other law enforcement agencies.

Rose Cantwell provided a report summarizing a Law Enforcement / Security Meeting that was held in Cedar Key on April 9, 2008. The report recommended several actions to improve law enforcement efforts and lease security.

The task force members agreed that a future task force meeting should be dedicated to law enforcement and security issues and focus on interagency involvement.

V. Regional Updates

Updates of regional activities were presented by regional representatives. Bill Lartz discussed growth and fouling issues in Alligator Harbor, Franklin County. Mike Hodges and Rose Cantwell identified challenges facing Cedar Key growers, including: market problems and security concerns. Support for the upcoming Clamerica festivities (Fourth of July) and the Cedar Key Aquaculture Associations General Meeting (June 18th) were also discussed. Dan Leonard reported that there are positive indications that clam farmers are doing better and that there is a renewed interest in clam farming in Charlotte, Lee and Collier Counties. He described the Pine Island lease areas as good and the Sandfly Key leases area as okay. Ed Mangano reported that utilization was less than fifty percent in the Indian River Aquaculture Use Zone and that planting was depressed with only about 8 to 10 active farmers. Water diversion was still seen as a problem and the leases in Body F continued to experience problems with *Gracilaria* coverage.

Leslie Sturmer provided the Extension Update which included information in the Sea Grant Survey and the Virginia Shellfish Aquaculture Report. She also discussed the need for an effective industry forum, improved industry communication, and electronic options that would improve communication. She discussed current status of the data loggers.

Mark Berrigan presented information provided by the Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing related to recent activities associated with marketing hard clams. Florida-farmed raised clams were in the spotlight at the recent Monterey Bay Aquarium Cooking for Solutions Show. Increasing markets and marketing new product lines continues to be a major concern for the clam farming industry. Members encouraged increased representation in the Fresh-From-Florida campaign and recommended requesting assistance from the University of Florida to look at marketing strategies. Additionally, members asked Mark Berrigan to follow up with discussion with Dr. Otwell regarding plans to include hard clams in the agenda for "Oyster School" in October.

The task force indicated that marketing was a serious concern, and was very interested in developing strategies to expand markets. Discussions focused on revisiting the viability of co-operative marketing, expanding customer base, and looking at various information-linked marketing tools. One area of discussion compared clam production, sales, product quality, and other factors between Florida and Virginia, a primary competitor. Differences between the two states that favored Virginia included: 1) higher product price; 2) proximity to northeastern markets; 3) better organized to respond to markets; 4) a few large companies dominate the industry; 5) larger scale (larger leases and more liberal leasing policies; and 6) use of beneficial marketing strategies (co-ops, seed sales and pricing strategies). The infusion of frozen Chinese clams into the marketplace was also identified as serious problem.

Mark Berrigan reported that the Division continues to move forward with efforts to amend Chapter 18-21, F.A.C., but progress had been slow. He also discussed recent legislative changes and the impacts of these changes on clam farmers, including fee increases. Additionally the FY 2008/09 budget was discussed: the Division did not receive budgetary reductions, the Ruskin Lab and the Indian River Aquaculture Center were funded, the ARC projects were funded, and the East Coast Cleanup project was funded.

VI. 2007 Florida Aquaculture Survey

Leslie Sturmer provided an update on the 2007 Florida Aquaculture Survey. The response rate was about 80%, with only nine dealers not responding. There was discussion about how the results should be reported; consensus among the members was that the results should be reported on a statewide basis, and also reported for Regions 1 and 2. Members from Cedar Key stated that it would be advantageous to report data from Region 1 separately.

VII. Task Force Membership.

Affidavits were completed and signed by members who agreed to continue service on the CITF. Dr. Joseph Weissman was the only sitting member who did not wish to continue service on the task force. Following discussion and nominations, the CITF selected Mr. Tom McCrudden to place Dr. Weissman. Like Dr. Weissman, Mr. McCrudden will act as a representative for hatchery/nursery operators, as well as the Indian River clam farmers.

VIII Public Comment

Mr. Jim Egan, representing the Indian River Natural Resources Council, addressed the need to understand the dynamics of blooms of toxic organisms in the Indian River Lagoon, and the importance of advancing research to develop mechanisms to predict blooms. He encouraged the task force to support research which could define cause and effect relationships and provide predictive indices to assist growers in minimizing the adverse impacts of harmful algal blooms.

IX Next Meeting – Agenda for Security Issue

The next CITF meeting was scheduled for September 24, 2008 in Cedar Key, to be held in conjunction with the UF IFAS Extension Workshop. The CITF meeting was scheduled for the morning and the extension workshop was scheduled for the afternoon. The location and agenda would be determined later.

The CITF members agreed that it was important to dedicate a future task force meeting to security and law enforcement issues. The meeting will be planned for a later date.

X. The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.