

# Clam Industry Task Force Meeting – September 24, 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, September 24, 2008

Time: 10:30 am to 1:00 pm

Place: Cedar Key Community Center  
809 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cedar Key, FL 32625

Please submit agenda items to Mark Berrigan by September 16, 2008.

The draft meeting minutes from the June 11, 2008, meeting and the agenda for the September 24, 2008, meeting will be mailed out on September 17, 2008.

## Meeting Agenda

## Meeting Minutes

**Minutes as Approved**  
Clam Industry Task Force Meeting  
Cedar Key Community Center  
Cedar Key, Florida  
September 24, 2008

### I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order and chairperson, Rose Cantwell, welcomed the task force members and guests and presided over the agenda and discussions. The meeting was called to order at 10:50 a.m.

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

#### Members Present

Ricky Cooke  
Dan Solano  
Mike Hodges

Bill Lartz  
Sue Colson  
Bill Leeming

Chris Topping  
Rose Cantwell  
Tom McCrudden

#### Members Absent

Tony Heeb

Rick Viele

Charles D. Sembler

#### Ex Officio

Leslie Sturmer  
Sherman James (Ag-Law)

Mark Berrigan

David Heil

## Guests

Victor Garrido  
Jason Bettis

Chuck Adams  
Steven Woodford

## II. Approval of Minutes

The Minutes of the June 11, 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 September 24, 2008 was accepted without objection.

## IV Regional Updates

Updates of regional activities were presented by regional representatives. Bill Lartz discussed growth and fouling issues in Alligator Harbor, Franklin County. Mr. Lartz reported that sales were OK, that there were about ten active farmers, and that no substantial damage was reported from recent storm events. Rose Cantwell (Cedar Key) reported on the preparations for the Seafood Festival, the Coastal Cleanup Project, the reception for Congresswoman Brown-Waite, and the challenges facing Cedar Key growers, including: market problems and security concerns. Tom McCrudden and Steve Woodford reported that salinity in the Indian River was a serious concern to local farmers. There was no report for the Southwest Florida region.

Rose Cantwell opened discussion related to the processing plant inspector position (Sanitation and Safety Specialist). The task force indicated concern that this position be filled as soon as possible and that it be given the highest priority. There was a recommendation and an approved motion that the task force send a letter of support to DACS emphasizing that vacant positions associated with shellfish safety should not be eliminated, should be given the highest priority for hiring, and that the current processing plant inspector position should remain in Cedar Key.

The task force discussed the implications of the Stan Mayfield Working Waterfront Act.

### Extension Updates

Leslie Sturmer provided the Extension Update which included an announcement of the Clam Industry Workshop and introduced the industry suppliers that were in attendance. Leslie opened discussion related to the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association and issues related to developing BMPs for shellfish aquaculture operations. The task force agreed that it would be beneficial to invite representatives of the ECSGA to a future task force meeting and to encourage active participation and guidance in the association.

Leslie also introduced some ideas for promoting Florida hard clams at the 2009 National Shellfish Association Meeting in Savannah, GA. Suggestions included sponsoring a “clam tasting” event to demonstrate the virtue of clams from various regions, perhaps an inter or intrastate competition to compare flavor, preparations and other presentations which promote product identity on regional or state levels.

## DACS Updates

### Division of Aquaculture (DOA)

Representatives of the DOA (Mark Berrigan and David Heil) discussed various actions relevant to the Division's activities, including the recent budget implications and the appointment of a new Assistant Division Director. There was a request that the task force be better informed regarding the Division's budget.

David Heil opened discussions related to shellfish health and safety; including issues associated with shellfish harvesting area closures prior to serious storm threats, such as hurricane watches and warnings. This issue will be addressed in more detail in a future TF meeting. David also provided an illness update and addressed recent Vv issues.

The task force again raised issues associated with the potential for cutting positions within the Division of Aquaculture and reiterated that the shellfish industry would suffer if the DOA lost positions that are essential to keep SHAs open. They emphasized that the Division Director and Deputy Commissioner should be informed of the task force's priorities as they relate to maintaining positions essential to the operation of shellfish businesses.

### Division of Marketing

Mark Berrigan presented information provided by the Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing related to recent activities associated with marketing hard clams. The Division of Marketing provided their Clam Promotion Plan for activities in 2008-2009, which included information about clam and wine promotions. Florida-farmed raised clams were in the spotlight at the recent Lakeridge Jazz Festival. Jason Bettis reported that the clams were well received and generated a lot of interest at the festival. This type of marketing provided great exposure to new consumers and similar promotions are planned for future events.

The task force continued to show interest in alternative marketing strategies to create interest in clam products and create new markets.

### Division of Law Enforcement

Sherman James provided an update of enforcement activities, and ensured that patrols would continue, notwithstanding the loss of his primary patrol vessel. No thefts were reported during the last few months.

The task force supported quick action to find a replacement vessel which would facilitate the presence of law enforcement on the water. The DOA responded that it might be possible to provide a vessel on a temporary basis until another vessel could be obtained.

Sherman also discussed the benefit of creating a flyer or other mechanism to provide pertinent information to the farmers and public about how to reach him or other officers at any time of day. The task force supported any action that would make law enforcement more available and effective.

## V. Hard Clam Industry Economic Survey

Chuck Adams (UF) provided analyses of preliminary data collected from the hard clam industry survey. Preliminary results indicated that 184 million hard clams were sold, accounting for about \$41 million. These results demonstrated that clam production was increasing and that the industry was recovering from the losses associated with hurricanes in 2004 and 2005. The final report is not yet available.

The task force approved of the report and stated their appreciation for the work and output from those involved in conducting the survey.

#### VI. Shellfish School 2008

Victor Garrido (UF) discussed plans for the 2008 version of Oyster School. The 2009 event would be "Shellfish School" and include information about farm raised hard clams, as well as oysters. Shellfish School 2008 was planned to showcase oysters and clams, while providing relevant product information to national and local buyers. Victor encouraged farmers and dealers to participate and to encourage their buyers and business representatives to also attend. A tentative agenda for Shellfish School 2008 was provided for discussion.

#### VII. Public Comment

No additional topics were introduced via public comment.

#### VIII. Next Meeting

The time, date and place for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter CITF meeting were not scheduled and will be determined later.

#### IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.