

FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

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CLAM FARMING TASK FORCE FOCUSES ON ISSUES

Dan Solano, Shellfish Industry representative to the Aquaculture Review Council, suggested the formation of a Clam Farming Task Force. The Division of Aquaculture created a 13-member Task Force consisting of Rose Cantwell, Sue Colson, Ricky Cooke, Tony Heeb, Mike Hodges, Bill Lartz, Billy Leeming, Chris Topping, Dan Leonard, Joe Weissman, Rick Viele, Charles Sembler, and Dan Solano to represent the principle hard clam farming regions: Alligator Harbor, Cedar Key, Charlotte Harbor, Indian River, and Pine Island.

The Task Force met in January on Cedar Key and adopted a mission statement proposed by Sue Colson:

Forum for clam industry members to have an open dialogue with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Aquaculture, and each other regarding any changes to policies, rules, or statutes pertaining to shellfish as well as address industry needs.

Task Force meeting and procedural logistics were also adopted.

- Meetings will be quarterly, held in the afternoon, and rotate between Cedar Key, Tallahas-

see, Charlotte Harbor, and Sebastian.

- Each meeting will be noticed according to the Florida Sunshine Act.
- A rotating, meeting-specific chair representing clam production or processing from the area in which the meeting is being held.
- Agendas will be prepared by Department and contain from one to three issues submitted by each area; proposed actions by the Department affecting shellfish policy, rules, laws, or budgets; Interstate Sanitation Shellfish Conference updates; outstanding topics from previous meetings; and a public comment period.

There was extensive discussion over public comment and the desire to ensure that industry members are encouraged to attend.

Briefings were presented on current issues by the Division of Aquaculture's two bureau chiefs: David Heil, Chief, Bureau of Environmental Services, discussed Harmful Algal Blooms, their affects, options

for handling outbreaks, and a request for industry input. The concept for sentinel stations was mentioned and discussion followed relative to establishing a pilot sentinel stations in Gasparilla Sound.

Mark Berrigan, Chief, Bureau of Aquaculture Development, discussed the bureau's activities, specifically the new BMPs for docks and the new dock legislation that went into affect on January 1, 2006, and that the Division will be moving forward on training monitors for relaying during red tide events so that more options will be available for growers next summer.

Several questions were raised concerning sampling stations and the monitoring sondes. Mr. Heil answered that there was flexibility for sampling stations, that each one had its good and bad aspects, and that each must meet the National Shellfish Sanitation Program guidelines set forth by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

For additional information contact Sherman Wilhelm, 850-488-4033, or wilhels@doacs.state.fl.us.

Aquaculture Puts the “Wild” in Wildwood Middle School

Aquaculture can be an exciting and unique educational tool combining science, social studies, math and language arts into a single course of study. With the help of a funding recommendation by the Aquaculture Review Council and support for funding from Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner of Agriculture, Wildwood Middle School of Sumter County joined 16 other Florida middle and high schools that have aquaculture-oriented curricula and built a catfish farm earlier this school year.

“The aquaculture unit in the agri-science department is now the most exciting and interesting part of the campus,” commented Susan



Swartzfager, Vocational, Agriculture and Science teacher at Wildwood. She added, “My first period class does the majority of the water quality testing, eighth graders, they consider themselves the advanced agri-science class. Two seventh grade classes handle the fish movement and monitoring of behavior and feeding, they also consider themselves the privileged and advanced agri-science classes. Then I have the maintenance classes of mixed seventh and eighth graders that feel there are no other students that can do what they do and they feel like they are the advanced agri-science classes.”

The students were initially heckled while digging holes and installing

tanks. However, the delivery of 14 large Siberian sturgeon (five to 15 pounds each) from Dr. Frank Chapman at the University of Florida changed student appreciation. Student fish farmers are now heralded for being in “Ag”.

Ms. Swartzfager marveled, “All I know is: aquaculture is on the tip of their tongues and on the edge of their minds all the time.” And she added, “The students that do not have my class are asking can I go look at the fish? Will you take me to see the



fish? What kind of fish are they? Where do they live? What do they eat? Why are they here? What are you doing with them? The students are asking all the right questions to learn without meaning to learn.”

Puzzled about Good Health and Seafood: Take Another Look!

Print and electronic media have been blitzed with conflicting and alarming information about the human health impacts of eating seafood. In response, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Royal Norwegian Ministry for Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries for Iceland, and the United Nations, Food and Agricultural Organization, joined forces to host *Seafood and Health 2005*.

The conference has launched a science-based initiative to clarify recent research findings about the role of seafood in human health and highlight many of the new research efforts examining the benefits of seafood and omega-3 fatty acids as well as known risks and hazards. A conference associated website,

<http://www.seafoodandhealth.org/conference.htm>, provides interested media and consumers with scientific contacts and summaries written in non-scientific terms.

NOAA also hosts a seafood and health website: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/seafood.htm>

Alarming media articles and conflicting health advisories concerning mercury and seafood prompted the University of Maryland to do something about it. They have launched a web site, <http://www.realm Mercury facts.org>, to help scientists, public, media and policy makers understand the range of published studies and analyses on mercury and seafood. The web site provides unbiased background information regarding mercury in seafood.

Seafood is an important part of a healthy diet; however, few Ameri-

cans eat the amount of fish and shellfish recommended for optimal health.

While almost nine in ten adult Americans report eating seafood at least occasionally, a little over one-third say they eat seafood once a week or more. This is in direct contrast with the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, which encourages two servings of fish a week. Behind this recommendation is scientific evidence that the omega-3 fatty acids in fish may reduce the risk of heart disease and are associated with optimal brain function and cognition, improved eye and skin health, protection against certain cancers. Research is being conducted to examine possible therapeutic effects on depression and specific autoimmune diseases including lupus, psoriasis, and arthritis.

AQUAFLO[®] Approved for Catfish

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent approval of AQUAFLO[®] (florfenicol) Type A Medicated Article for catfish marked a significant milestone in the industry's combined efforts to make more products available for public and commercial aquaculture.

"Schering-Plough invested more than five years bringing this product to market, but we couldn't have done it without the teamwork and commitment from our development partners," stresses Dr. Richard Endris, research program manager, Schering-Plough Animal Health Corporation, the company that developed AQUAFLO[®].

Working toward a common goal

Dr. Patricia Gaunt — an associate professor, aquatic animal health at Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine played a significant role in the development of AQUAFLO[®] for U.S. channel catfish — approached Schering-Plough Animal Health in 1997 about a pilot project using florfenicol in catfish, which was funded and completed the following year.

Shortly thereafter, Rosalie Schnick, the National Coordinator for Aquaculture New Animal Drug Applications, proposed gaining approval of AQUAFLO[®] in a variety of fish species including channel

catfish through the Federal-State Aquaculture Drug Approval Partnership Project under the auspices of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.



A self-described "matchmaker," Schnick worked with state and federal agencies as well as

other organizations to support AQUAFLO[®], which last fall became the first in-feed antibiotic licensed for U.S. aquaculture in more than 20 years.

MSU's Gaunt helped Schering-Plough Animal Health conduct necessary studies on efficacy, residue depletion and catfish safety. Dr. Craig Tucker, head of the National Warmwater Aquaculture Center in Stoneville, assessed the environmental safety in pond systems. Another research group, the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (UMESC), US Geological Survey, in La Crosse, Wisc., carried out the pivotal target animal safety study.

The FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine also loaned its expertise. "CVM has provided direct guidance to assure a more efficient approval process for aquaculture drugs," says Schnick. "The agency has also helped to educate us on how to meet requirements and really formed a partnership with us through the drug approval process."

"Cooperation between this large number of groups is certainly unique, as is the major role played by Schering-Plough and their steadfast efforts and investment to get a new aquaculture drug approved," says Dr. Tom Bell of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership Program (AADAP).

Cooperation pays off

With the approval of AQUAFLO[®], aquaculture not only has the first new drug in more than two decades, it has exclusive Veterinary Feed Directive status from the FDA to regulate its use and ensure its long-term effectiveness.

"This approval model for new drugs allows for mutually beneficial partnerships to form," stresses Schnick, "and that can only benefit aquaculture."

Only the beginning

Mississippi State University and AADAP continue working jointly with Schering-Plough Animal Health to develop studies on *Flavobacterium columnare*, the second leading cause of catfish disease, which is also an important pathogen of salmonids. UMESC and others are also working on other AQUAFLO[®] label claims that will help benefit all of US aquaculture.

For more information on AQUAFLO[®], catfish farmers should contact their veterinarian, diagnostician, feed mill or Schering-Plough Animal Health at 1-800-521-5767. Internet: www.AQUAFLO-USA.com.

Florida Aquaculture Specialty License Tag: What's on Your Bumper?

The Florida Aquaculture specialty license tag has been available 18 months with 3,167 tags sold generating \$89,225 to benefit aquaculture research and development programs at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution's Aquaculture Division.

These funds supplement Harbor Branch's aquaculture outreach programs for middle and high school students and their teachers, community college students, and the public.

Harbor Branch educates participants and visitors on what is aquaculture, the importance of the aquaculture industry in Florida (for food, stock enhancement, and ornamentals), new technologies and advancements, how to start an aquaculture business, and aquaculture as a career choice.



Funding from the plate also supports Harbor Branch's aquaculture research programs in the areas of molluscan aquaculture (clams, oysters and conch), disease diagnostics (fish, shrimp, lobsters, and bivalves), and marine biomedical aquaculture (sponges). These are important areas of research for Florida aquaculturists and new business ventures.

Future research will also include evaluation of cost-effective growout systems, effluent management, and development of innovative techniques to culture food fish, molluscs, crustaceans and ornamentals.

The Florida Aquaculture Association also receives funding from the Florida Aquaculture license plate to carryout important educational outreach activities. For additional information visit: http://www.hboi.edu/aqua/aqua_home.html.

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*Benefiting commercial aquaculture,
Conserving natural resources*



Shellfish Farmers Must Complete the Annual Audit of Sovereign Submerged Land Leases

The Division of Aquaculture conducts annual audits of sovereignty submerged land leases to determine if leaseholders are complying with their lease agreement and business plans. The audit is provided in the form of a questionnaire/affidavit that requires the leaseholder to notarize their response. Information to be provided includes: the amount of seed stocks planted on the lease, the source of seed stocks, amount harvested, if the lease is properly marked, and if the leaseholder has a current certification. Field staff may also conduct on-site compliance inspections in conjunction with the lease audit.



The annual audits of sovereignty submerged land leases will be mailed out this year at approximately the same time as the invoices for lease fees are mailed. If a shellfish farmer has multiple leases, the farmer may receive audit questionnaires at various times throughout the year, depending upon when each lease is billed. If you have questions, please call Anne Cerwin, 850-488-5471, or cerwin@doacs.state.fl.us.

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