Division of Aquaculture
Florida Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services

Charles H. Bronson
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Florida Aquaculture

Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual (4th edition) to be released in May

Look for an amended version of Chapter 5L-3, Aquaculture Best Management Practices, Florida Administrative Code, this spring. The Division has been working with aquaculturists, extension specialists, environmental groups and state agencies to amend and develop additional Best Management Practices which are to be implemented under the Aquaculture Certification Program.

Much discussion and effort went into a new chapter entitled "Marine Net Pens and Cages." With no historical background to rely upon for baseline information, you will notice that the net pen BMPs are more comprehensive and rigorous.

Thanks to the efforts and cooperative attitude of many stakeholders these BMPs represent a viable regulatory effort that will protect Florida's near shore environment and have minimal effect on the economic viability of operations.

A copy of the new manual or the pending draft can be obtained by calling 850-488-4033 or by visiting http://www.floridaaquaculture.com.

If you have questions please give us a call, or ask one of our staff members when they are inspecting your facility.

Inside this issue:

Clam Industry Task Force working on issues

The Clam Industry Task Force met at the Cedar Key Community Center on February 8, 2007. Sue Colson served as chair, opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and presided over the agenda, and discussions.

Rose Cantwell, Cedar Key Aquaculture Association, provided an overview of the Association's responsibilities and actions related to a contract with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to provide financial assistance to Gulf Coast clam farmers. The Association will develop a scope-of-services plan to include two funding categories: clam hatcheries and clam farmers. Several regional issues related to scope-of-services were discussed: developing lists for the numbers and types of lease markers and signs, developing regional assessments for cleanup activities, and removing derelict clam bags.

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Clam Industry Task Force Issues (cont'd from page one)

Leslie Sturmer, University of Florida shellfish extension specialist, provided information pertaining to the derelict bag removal project, including project objectives, applications and guidelines for sub-contractors, and participation by leaseholders. The Levy County Soil and Water District agreed to enter into a contract with the Cedar Key Aquaculture Association to administer the derelict bag removal project in Levy County.

The criteria for providing funds to hatchery operators was discussed. The Task Force recommended that the Association 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 by other assistance programs. Funds would be allocated on an equal basis, which would include a maximum cap on funds allotted to each participant.

Bob Vincent, Florida Department of Health (DOH), introduced local and state health departments' representatives and described DOH responsibilities and regulatory authority over specific water supply systems. 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: duplicate inspection by the Division of Aquaculture and DOH, burden of duplicative water samples, the need for additional regulation when facilities have been operating under stringent regulatory framework for a long time with no public health problems, and the economic consequences of having to retrofit existing wells or discontinue operations.

Dr. Joe Weissman, owner and operator of Sea-Ag (a hard clam hatchery), provided a review of the events leading up to the closure of the clam hatchery at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute (HBOI). The HBOI hatchery and the Sea-Ag hatchery located on HBOI property will be affected by the decision and production could be discontinued by April 2007. Several alternatives for continuing production at HBOI were discussed. It was generally agreed that HBOI seed production was critical to sustaining clam farming in the short term and that smaller farmers may find it difficult to obtain clam seed if HBOI production stops.

The next meeting for the Clam Industry Task Force was tentatively planned for Tallahassee in April.

For additional information about the Clam Industry Task Force, contact Sherman Wilhelm or Mark Berrigan at 850-488-4033.

Annual Post Harvest Process (PHP) capacity survey results

The National Shellfish Sanitation Program requires Florida to have Post Harvest Processing (PHP) capacity for 25% of oysters intended for the raw half-shell market harvested from Florida waters from May through September (22 weeks).

The Division of Aquaculture surveyed oyster processors during February and found the total PHP capacity from May through September was 77,154,000 pounds. This capacity exceeds Florida's reported production for the entire year. Therefore, Florida continues to exceed the 25% PHP capacity requirement of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program.

Capacity is defined as the amount of PHP product that a processor can produce if they were operating the PHP process full time (3 shifts per 24 hour day), seven days a week.

For additional information, contact David Heil at 850-487-5471 or heild@doacs.state.fl.us.

Smarter application improves catfish vaccines

New vaccination processes could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of catfish vaccines, according to USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists. Diseases like enteric septicemia and columnaris cost catfish farmers an estimated $50-70 million per year.

ARS invented two vaccines to immunize catfish against these diseases. The vaccines were patented and licensed to vaccine manufacturer Intervet. Both vaccines can be given to channel catfish eggs about 24-48 hours before hatching. This suggests they can be successfully vaccinated during the "eyed-egg stage," when they are still in the hatchery—long before they're exposed to pond pathogens. Currently, fish are vaccinated when they are 10 days old.

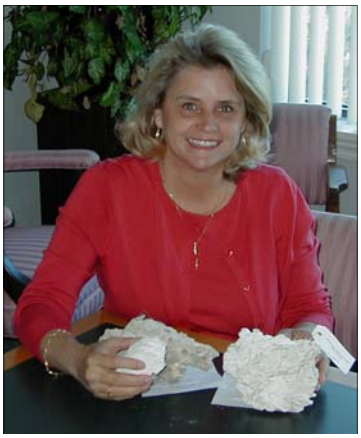
The study proved that the two vaccines could be administered simultaneously, making the treatment more efficient. This is beneficial, as both pathogens frequently appear in the same ponds. The 10- to-15 minute process is easy, safe and effective. The catfish are still protected against the disease 140 days after immunization.

Effective vaccines have multiple benefits, the most important of which is improved fish health. Vaccinated fish require fewer chemicals and antibiotics to fight disease. And they grow faster than nonvaccinated fish, which translates to higher profits for farmers. One study estimates that farmers can increase their profits by about $2,000 per acre.

ARS is the USDA's scientific research agency.

Division welcomes new employee

Kim Norgren is a new addition to the Division of Aquaculture team. Throughout her career, Kim has worked in many areas of fisheries and aquaculture. After her undergraduate work in the Pacific Northwest, she worked for the Oregon Fish & Wildlife and the National Marine Fisheries Service completing benthic and epibenthic studies on the lower Columbia River.



From there, she traveled to Baja Vera Paz, Guatemala, for the Peace Corps to develop rural aquaculture projects. Her program constructed over 180 family fish ponds and two community hatcheries, spawning both tilapia and carp. Upon completion of her tour, she entered the private sector to manage a geothermal hatchery in Alamosa, Colorado raising "white" tilapia hybrids, freshwater eels, and aquarium swordtails. It was experience with the tilapia hybrid that took her to Auburn University for graduate work in fisheries genetics. During her graduate studies, Kim conducted electrophoretic analysis of largemouth bass and spotted bass populations among differing watersheds of Alabama, and helped to evaluate the states' Florida Bass stocking programs.

Following her graduate work, Kim was hired by Auburn University as a senior research associate to direct the genetics lab for the Fisheries Department and the Southeast Cooperative Genetics Project. While at Auburn, Kim had the opportunity to work on brown trout, white and striped bass, channel and blue catfish, a variety of sunfish, and the Alabama paddlefish.

After many years of vacationing along the Florida coast, Kim and her family left Auburn for the quiet beauty of St. George Island, Florida (just in time to experience hurricane Opal), and to work with a fisheries consulting company. She recently relocated to Tallahassee and joined the Division working on estuarine ecological and environmental issues.

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Benefiting commercial aquaculture,
Conserving natural resources

DACS-P-00082

13th Annual Drug Approval Coordination Workshop

July 31 - August 1, 2007
The Holiday Inn
5 Baxter Lane
Bozeman, Montana

Discussion will focus on drugs in-progress to achieve U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval. Representatives from the FDA-Center for Veterinary Medicine (FDA-CVM), university and agency research, and drug companies will be present. This is an opportunity for aquaculturists to discuss Investigational New Animal Drugs (INAD) and New Animal Drug Application (NADA) objectives.

In addition to the two-day workshop, the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture National Aquaculture Drug Research Forum meeting is scheduled. This is a half-day research session on August 2nd where those involved in aquaculture drug research can meet and discuss scientific issues and challenges with their FDA-CVM counterparts.

For workshop information visit http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/aadap/inadworkshop07.htm or call 406-587-9265.

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