

**Maine Seafood Alliance
Directors' Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2006**

Present: Steve Beatham, Albert Carver, Darcie Couture (DMR), Julie Keene, Randy Ramsdell, Dan Rogde, Cecil Wood, Barbara Maurer (DE RC&D)

Item 1: Minutes of May 23 meeting - approved, motion by Cecil, second by Randy

Item 2: Treasurer's Report – approved, motion by Cecil, second by Randy

Item 3: Other – Randy said that all 6 members of the Machiasport Shellfish Committee will be joining (they were impressed by the non-closures, even on the rainy weekend we just had). Dan said that Bar Harbor Bank as well as Machias Savings Bank will most likely be on board, as well as 3 out-of-state members.

Item 4: Discussion with DMR

Darcie distributed a letter from Amy Fitzpatrick outlining the scheduling change to cover the biotoxins and water quality laboratories seven days a week from April 1 to November 30.

Darcy then went over the questions the MSA had posed:

1. Regarding Growing Area Designations – what is the Department's point of view? Can MSA be of any assistance in moving this along?

DMR thinks this is a good idea. It is complex, but not impossible. They are working on a draft which they will show to MSA for input before it goes through the regulatory process. They would like to have a draft by the end of summer, but it could be later.

2. Will the new positions, just obtained in the special session be permanent or are they just temporary?

They are permanent. They now have 4 of the 7 positions filled and are checking references on the remainder. They hope to have everyone on the ground in 2-3 weeks. The testing equipment has been ordered and is being set up now.

Cecil asked what would happen to the budget increase if it is a relatively clean year. Darcie said there are so many projects that need doing, these folks will have plenty to do even if there is a clean year. The money is not going back.

3. Is historical data with regard to rainfall testing available/

It is available, but not in a format that is easily accessible. It is in a gigantic database that is hard to manage.

4. We are a bit ahead of where we were in the past but how can we collaborate on educating the consumer with regard to DMR's work and safe consumption of shellfish?

DMR said that historically the press in the southern part of the state has been more responsible and less sensational than the papers in Bangor or Ellsworth. Katherine Cassidy of the Bangor Daily has spoken with DMR and met with MSA to really understand the issues. Hopefully this will help.

Red Tide Update: Darcie said that right now Red Tide seems to be stable in both ends of the State. MDI had a spike last week and Western Maine and Casco have had some, but statewide it is better. This year they can really check and hold the lines as small as possible. So far there hasn't been any widespread negative press either.

Albert said we do need to be prepared just in case. In an effort to educate the public, he suggested that MSA write a press release to all the papers stating that DMR has expanded and upgraded its testing program. The focus has to be that the scientists are on top of the situation and that the seafood that is for sale is safe, even when there is red tide in some areas. Darcie said that there were 7 million pounds of shellfish landed in Maine from May through August 2005 (excluding lobster).

5. Can the Maine Seafood Alliance be used as a vehicle to obtain grants that would be useful to DMR and beneficial to the shellfish industry?

- Yes. It would be very helpful for MSA to look into grants for getting automated rainfall gauges.

Danny will ask the National Weather Service / NOAA about the costs involved, i.e. how much the units cost (est. about a couple of hundred dollars each), where they get them and what the operating/maintenance costs are (phone lines, etc.), as DMR also wouldn't have money to maintain them. Darcie said this would help immensely.

DMR will have Amy write a letter to MSA requesting Rain Gauges and will look into where the best placement would be.

Gary Edwards will look into possible grants. Grant for Rain Gauges to be put on the next agenda.

- Darcie also mentioned a project of the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership got about \$16,000 or \$17,000 to hire a boat to go to 45 buoys to get samples in Casco Bay. This costs money, but was effective in Casco Bay and might be something that would work well in Cobscook Bay as well. Cecil said that the Fort O'Brien School got about \$1,000,000 for water testing. Perhaps MSA could work with them to do something like this.

6. What are the pros and cons into putting a surcharge on licenses as opposed to a per bushel tax?

Darcie will ask David to get back to MSA regarding this.

7. What does the department see as the most important issues going forward? How can MSA help with these?

Darcie said the best thing would be for MSA to get involved in the process. DMR strongly recommends that MSA join the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference and the Northeast Shellfish Sanitation Association. These conferences are where issues are discussed and would give MSA a voice for the Maine Shellfish Industry. Benefits include receiving information to review and having the opportunity to make recommendations on proposed changes to the Model Ordinance. MSA, as a multi-species group, would have a good perspective on the ramifications of the proposed changes.

Members can also submit proposals to change the NSSP Model Ordinance. If MSA sent one person (August 2007 in Tennessee) for 4-5 days of intense conferences and networking it would be of great value. It is very political and very energetic. It would be good for MSA to be involved on the national level (ISSC).

NESSA is on a smaller scale where each state gives an update on Red Tide and other issues. Involvement would also give MSA a voice on the regional level.

Item 5 - Other Business:

- Randy asked what the criteria are in determining an area. Is it based on a certain number of acres? Darcie said that it is different in different cases. For instance a large cove could be two areas. Some of the determining factors are known pollution sources and knowing how far that can spread in the particular situation.
- Steve asked if there is any way that growers could be in any category other than harvester or dealer (now they are harvesters.). Darcie said that they really have to be one or the other so they can be tracked.
- Julie suggested working with Suffolk College in Edmunds. They might be able to help with some of these projects.
- Down East Institute might also be able to help as they have a boat and staff and possibly more partners.
- Darcie will include maps as attachments to emails regarding red tide closures. She will see if this is also possible for water quality closures.
- Julie asked about DMR's criteria for licensing. Robbinston, for instance has no ordinance, clambers just have to be residents of Maine, but it is not clear if they are legal residents of the U.S. The concern is that there could be illegal workers clamming the flats. Darcie said this would be an enforcement issue and that the Marine Patrol may need to increase their presence and that DMR may need to work more closely with the towns to ensure that those being licensed have proper documentation.
- MSA thanked Darcie for attending. The collaboration is working very well. MSA feels very positive about DMR's responses and is looking forward to the ongoing dialogue. MSA will have more questions going forward and asks DMR to also keep thinking of how we can collaborate effectively.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting, July 18, 2006