

ECSGA
1623 Whitesville Rd.
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www.ECSGA.org



Volume 2:06
November 2006

From the Mouth of the Bay

It seems to me that shellfish farmers spend way too much time defending our right to farm. Is there any other industry short of nuclear power that faces as many regulatory challenges and NIMBY resistance? New and proposed farms are increasingly faced with vigorous challenges from waterfront homeowners, environmental groups and overzealous regulators.

Last year we were battling the petition to list the oyster as an endangered species. This year we are faced with the prospect of new regulatory requirements from the Army Corps of Engineers. The ACOE has posted proposed standards for a new Nationwide Permit for Aquaculture (NWP "D").

The Army Corps published the proposed standards and we mounted a grand effort to get our members to submit individual comments that amplified and reinforced the comments that we had posted on our web site. Growers from all three coasts did a great job.

Note: If you are not already listening to the discussions on the ECSGA Listserv, then you are missing out on a lot of important information. It costs nothing and easy instructions for signing up are on our web site; www.ECSGA.org.

A couple of quick observations about the proposed new NWP "D":

First: The Corps wants to protect eelgrass from aquaculture, but it would be more appropriate if they recognized that it is not the eelgrass itself

that they cherish, but rather it is the ecosystem services rendered by the eelgrass that need to be protected.

We all love eelgrass because it provides excellent habitat for many other species, stabilizes the bottom and helps remove excess nutrients from eutrophic coastal waters. However, if the Corps were to acknowledge that it is these ecosystem services that they seek, then they would be promoting the expansion of shellfish aquaculture instead of creating limits on us. In most cases the ecosystem services provided by shellfish farms are at least as good or better than the services rendered by eelgrass. Most types of shellfish aquaculture provide a superior habitat and attract a diverse population of juvenile fish, crustaceans, fouling organisms and forage species. Fish abundance in and around shellfish farms is often far greater than in eelgrass. Shellfish actively filter the water, improving clarity and quality and when the animals are harvested nitrogen and phosphate are removed from the ecosystem.

Secondly: The Corps uses the terms submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) and eelgrass interchangeably, even though the term SAV would technically encompass a much larger group of seaweeds, many of which are nuisance species that do not provide the same ecological services as eelgrass.

Third: The Corps seems to feel that an arbitrary acreage limit of 25 acres should trigger

the need for special permit requirements. A more rational approach would be to look at which culture methods or biomass densities pose the greatest risks of adverse impacts and concentrate your limited resources on regulating those operations.

Fourth: The proposed NWP “D” seems to give the District Engineer broad authority to decide whether a farm activity “may affect” or will have “no effect” on listed species and designated critical habitat. This could be good or very bad depending on your District Engineer and what sort of consultation advice he or she is getting from the regional NOAA and Fish and Wildlife biologists. We have already seen in

California, how misguided but well-intentioned biologists can cost farms millions in legal fees, and research dollars just trying to stay in business.

Thanks to the many of you who sent in well thought out comments. Tune in to the ECSGA LIST so you can stay on top of the next crisis and check out our website for a full analysis of the ACOE permit.

We will be storming Capitol Hill in February to push our issues in front of the new Congress and we hope more of you will join us so we can make ourselves heard.

Bob Rheault

The ECSGA Listserv

Shellfish information, discussion and debate

We should be proud of the ECSGA Listserv. It appears to be serving a critical role in getting timely information to the shellfish community, and is serving as an active forum for discussion and debate.

Recent activity on the List included notices of our annual meeting, reminders to send comments to the Army Corps of Engineers on the proposed new Nationwide Permit for shellfish aquaculture, the release of the new Request for Proposals from NRAC, an oyster

stuffing recipe for Thanksgiving, a discussion and compilation of minimum harvest sizes for clam and oysters on a state-by-state basis, and an extensive discussion on oyster gardening. Traffic on the List is not too heavy – just right!

You will find the ECSGA Listserv an excellent way to keep up with the hot topics that affect shellfish farming and shellfish research. If you are not “listening in” and would like to, you can get details on how to sign up on our website <http://www.ecsga.org>

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Upcoming Events

Links to more information available on the ECSGA website.

Maryland Watermen's Show – January 26-28, 2007 at the Ocean City Convention Center, Maryland. The 33rd Annual East Coast Commercial Fishermen's and Aquaculture Trade Exposition. Contact: (410) 269-6622.

The 2007 "Walk on the Hill", February 5-9, 2007 in Washington, DC. The ECSGA, Gulf Oyster Industry Council and the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association visit Congressional offices. Contact: Ed Rhodes - (203) 878-0510.

Aquaculture 2007 -- February 26 - March 2, 2007 at the San Antonio Convention Center, Texas. This triennial meeting, the largest aquaculture conference and tradeshow in the world, combines the annual meetings of the National Shellfisheries Association, the Fish Culture Section of the American Fisheries Society, the World Aquaculture Society and others. Conference Manager - (760) 751-5005.

International Boston Seafood Show -- March 11-13, 2007 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Massachusetts. Contact: Diversified Communications - (207) 842-5500.

Plans Made for the 2007 "Walk on the Hill"

The annual Walk on the Hill will take place in D.C. during the week of February 5th – 9th. This is the most important opportunity we have to express our concerns to our Senators and Representatives about Federal actions that affect shellfish farming. The ECSGA is joined by the Gulf Oyster Industry Council and the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association in visits to dozens of Congressional offices.

Key to the "Walk" is a three-coast industry meeting that will be held under the auspices of the Molluscan Shellfish Institute, part of the National Fisheries Institute, on Monday, February 5th. It's at that meeting that we set our agenda and talking points for the Congressional meetings later in the week. The MSI folks also do a tremendous job of

scheduling the Congressional meetings, making the time we spend in D.C. more efficient.

In addition to the in-office meetings with our national representatives and their staff that week, the ECSGA will also participate in a Shellfish Caucus seminar on Tuesday, and we will co-sponsor a shellfish reception for Congressmen and their key staffers Wednesday evening.

If you would like to participate, please let Bob Rheault know or call Ed Rhodes for more details. We really need you to help with this. Our message is amplified if we have strong representation from ECSGA, and although it's a hectic week it is extremely rewarding as well. Please try to join the ECSGA delegation for some or all of that week.

ECSGA Comments on Proposed Nationwide Permits

The ECSGA and many ECSGA members submitted comments to the Army Corps of Engineers on their proposed new Nationwide Permit D covering shellfish aquaculture. You can read the ECSGA comments on our website.

Thanks to all the ECSGA members who took the time to let the Corps know their opinion on this issue. The Corps will issue the final regulations in March 2007.

Shellfish Caucus

The Shellfish Caucus recently sent a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers expressing concern for the proposed additional regulations for shellfish aquaculture, and showing support for the comments from the national shellfish organizations (ECSGA, PCSGA and GOIC)

The caucus is just a year old, but has proven to be a valuable way for us to get our message to Congress and to the Federal agencies that we deal with. The current caucus members are listed below; the first six are the co-chairs. Please let the Caucus members that represent you know that you appreciate their participation. One of the items on the agenda for our three-coast shellfish meeting in D.C. in February is to work out some of the ways that we can more effectively use the caucus to move our shellfish agenda forward.

Current shellfish caucus members:

Rep. Thelma Drake (VA) – co-chair
Rep. Brian Baird (WA) – co-chair
Rep. Mike Thompson (CA) – co-chair
Rep. Henry Brown (SC) – co-chair
Rep. Bobby Jindal (LA) – co-chair
Rep. John Larson (CT) – co-chair

Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (MD)
Rep. Joe Wilson (SC)
Rep. James McGovern (MA)
Rep. Steve Israel (NY)
Rep. Darlene Hooley (OR)
Rep. Mike McIntyre (NC)
Rep. Tim Bishop (NY)
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (CT)
Rep. Allen Boyd (FL)
Rep. Jo Ann Davis (VA)
Rep. Frank LoBiondo (NJ)
Rep. Rick Larsen (WA)
Rep. Lynn Woolsey (CA)
Rep. Donald Payne (NJ)
Rep. Adam Smith (WA)

Letters to ECSGA

Birds Like Oyster Culture – Not in New Jersey

Interesting article on the bird enhancement programme on the West Coastⁱ, but unfortunately, in NJ the omnipotent bird people have declared rack and bag culture to be a decidedly unacceptable intrusion on shore bird happiness. Not only that, they have pronounced such activity on the Cape Shore tidal flats to be an insurmountable impediment to the libido-crazed king crabs (aka horseshoe crabs) in their annual spawning rush to the beaches. Indeed, the poor king crabs might bump their cute little heads on a rack stanchion and decide the polyandric orgy on the beach was not worth the effort, make an about face and return to the depths of the Bay to sulk. This, of course, would certainly diminish the number of eggs deposited on the beach and starve the feathered

two-legged rats which, as every good birder knows, depend exclusively on this source of nourishment.

Needless to say, this attack on birddom has been postulated to be accomplished with a narrow, widely spaced set of racks that occupy about 150 metres of a more than an 80 km stretch of beach available to the birds and king crabs on the NJ side of the Bay alone. And this state of the art pseudoscience is given credence and endorsed by some lawyer types in our illustrious DEP, abetted by "testimony" of a few greedy and unscrupulous prostitutes in the bird X-Spurt community.

Walt from Bivalve-sur-Maurice

ⁱ Bird Conservation International 15:237-255

Vibrio parahaemolyticus Update

This summer, an outbreak of human illness caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (V.p.) in west coast oysters became a national event. Eventually about 200 cases were traced back to the consumption of these shellfish, including some in New York state. At about the same time the situation was brought under control, the FDA issued a strong warning against eating any raw clams or oysters from the Pacific Northwest and that announcement gained wide media coverage causing an additional period of low sales.

On the basis of the 2006 outbreak and other incidents in past years, the FDA is putting pressure on the shellfish industry and state regulators to establish more aggressive control plans for V.p. Suggestions for control plans center on getting product harvested in the

warmer months under refrigeration sooner. At an Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference meeting in Atlanta in October the FDA threatened (my word, not theirs) the industry with pre-emptive warnings against the raw consumption of shellfish that they would issue as summer approaches if such new controls are not in place. The Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference has started a series of regional workshops to present the case for additional controls and have already held one on the west coast in conjunction with a PCSGA meeting. They have tentatively scheduled an east coast workshop to be held at the Maryland Waterman's Show in Ocean City, Maryland on January 26th.

-ER

Successful Milford Oyster Festival 2006

For the second year in a row, the ECSGA participated in the Milford (CT) Oyster Festival by running a raw bar featuring oysters from a dozen of our member companies. This year the Festival held a shucking contest, and we were able to use 10 of the fastest shuckers from the U.S. and Canada in our booth for most of the day. We ended up selling more than 13,000 oysters in a seven-hour period and made about \$5,500 for our organization, after paying about \$4,500 to the growers who supplied the oysters. Our thanks to Down East Oysters (Jim Anderson), Watch Hill Oysters® (Jeff Gardner), Wellfleet Oysters (Chopper Young and Allison Paine), Island Creek Oysters (Skip Bennett), Tomahawk Oysters® (Rob Garrison), Moonstone Oysters® (Bob Rheault), Matunuck Oysters (Perry Raso), Mystic Oysters (Jim Markow), Saddlerock Oysters® (Tom Kehoe), and York River Oysters™ (Tommy Leggett).

The shucking contest and \$600 was won by William "Chopper" Young from Wellfleet,

Massachusetts who shucked 24 oysters in 89 seconds with 67 penalty seconds for a total of 2 minutes 36 seconds. He finished 15 seconds ahead of Verne Johnson from Pennsylvania. Third went to Luis Iglesias from the Grand Central Oyster Bar



Milford Oyster Festival, 2006

We'll be back in Milford on August 18, 2007. Come help and enjoy!

MSC Rejects Expansion of Eco-label to Farmed Seafood

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) has announced that it will not be expanding the scope of its eco-label scheme to include farmed seafood. The MSC Board stated that the organization will continue to focus its resources and activities on its core mission as the momentum and opportunities to accelerate the delivery of its wild capture program continue to

expand very rapidly. It had been reported that the MSC was considering the inclusion of farmed seafood within its existing certification scheme. The decision reportedly came after the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations announced that nearly half of the fish consumed worldwide now originates from aquaculture.

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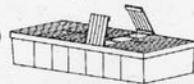
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Pay Your 2007 Dues On-line

The ECSGA urges you to pay your 2007 dues on-line. We use a company called Count Me In (CMI) to provide on-line membership services, including the ability to pay your 2007 dues with a credit card or check. If you are not yet a member, you can join on-line as well. Our website has the information you need to use the CMI

system. Log on to <http://www.ecsga.org> and at the top of the home page you will find the link you need to pay dues or to join up. If you prefer, you can still join or pay dues the old fashioned way, and we have provided a membership form and mailing address in this newsletter.

**Mail Membership form
and dues to:**

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**Membership
Application
Form**

NB: The best way to join is through Count Me In on the ECSGA web site! www.ecsga.org

Dues Schedule

Gross Sales	Dues
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300K to 3M	\$1000
Over 3M	\$1500
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Associations	\$10/member
Non-voting	\$35

Member Benefits:

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Listing on our website for growers, dealers and hatcheries

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The mission of the ECSGA is to promote responsible commercial shellfish aquaculture through market research and promotion, active involvement in public education, participation in policy formation at the state and national levels, and directed research.

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