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Cedar Key Struggles to Recover from Hurricane Hermine



Executive Director
Bob Rheault

After meandering around in the Gulf of Mexico as a tropical depression that seemed like nothing much to worry about, Hurricane Hermine gathered steam and made a beeline for Cedar Key, Fla. on Sept 2. The first hurricane to hit Florida in 11 years, Hermine did most of her damage with a seven-to-nine-foot tidal surge and waves driven by 60-70 knot winds.

Cedar Key and a couple of other small coastal fishing and tourist communities bore the brunt of the storm. If you have ever visited Cedar Key you know that this unique community reinvented itself as a clam-farming town after the net ban eradicated most commercial fishing. Dozens of growers support ancillary businesses like

hatcheries, nurseries, processors, dealers, boat builders and equipment purveyors. Recently, many in the town had begun experimenting with suspended oyster culture.

Damage to hard-clam crops and oyster gear has been described as catastrophic. Even though the community made significant



progress cleaning up debris with the help of a record turnout of volunteers for their annual Coastal Cleanup, Cedar Key needs more help from outside sources. Seed demand is going to skyrocket as growers try to get back to where they were, and damage to local hatcheries will only compound this challenge. Seed supply was

tight even before the storm. I hope that hatcheries up and down the coast can work with local broodstock to help these growers get back on their feet.

The Cedar Key Aquaculture Association has opened a dedicated Hermine Recovery account to fund efforts to clean up farm gear and marine debris, replace Private Aids to Navigation, help rebuild infrastructure (shellfish hatcheries, processing plants, land-based nurseries, aquaculture-designated docks), and to purchase shellfish seed.

We wish the Cedar Key community the best in the weeks and years ahead as they struggle to rebuild. Those of us who saw Hermine pass and suffered little more than a few downed branches should be thankful for our luck. I hope we can all help out those in Cedar Key who took it on the chin. See the end of this story to find out

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Preventing Shellfish Theft

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

The explosive growth enjoyed by the shellfish aquaculture industry over the past few years has come with an unwelcome side effect: increasing incidents of shellfish poaching. Shellfish theft is an age-old problem, whether of animals bottom-planted in sanctuaries intended for restoration, or for privately-owned shellfish grown in containerized gear. Unfortunately, the few miscreants who have managed to actually get caught tend to get off lightly. Furthermore, it's a sure bet that many thefts have gone completely undetected. Adding insult to injury, several heists have involved cases where one grower was stealing from another, taking not only the shellfish, but expensive cages and gear as well. Years ago I was a victim for several months before I managed to apprehend the culprit who was helping me harvest on a regular basis.

It's clear that we cannot really count on the authorities to protect us. Instead we must look for workable solutions to protect the crops we have worked so hard to rear. The best plan of attack is to deter any theft before it happens, as enforcement and prosecution seem to be failing our industry.

I have yet to see any really affordable off-the-shelf surveillance and monitoring gear, but many innovators



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The Eagle Vision 3000 series of rugged long-range cameras includes models with detection ranges of 1 km to over 20 km, and that work in every light condition from bright daylight to dark, fog and smoke. But the hefty price tag (starting at \$19K) makes it a viable option only for the largest operations or groups of growers working in the same area.

out there are working on this issue. A few months ago I asked readers of our Listserv to take a survey about theft, and within a few short weeks 74 growers had responded. They were mostly from small operations (66 percent had fewer than three employees) and most were established veterans. While only 12 percent of respondents thought theft was a big problem,

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Milford Oyster Festival: 2016 Wrap-Up

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

The 2016 Milford Festival was a huge success once again, shattering all previous sales records. For the eleventh straight year we enjoyed spectacular weather as massive crowds of eager shellfish lovers stopped by our three tents to sample a variety of 42,000 oysters and clams provided by ECSGA members. Every year we bring 20 percent more shellfish and every year we essentially sell out. After this latest success we are thinking about adding a fourth tent for next year.

I am profoundly grateful to all those who stepped up to help out. We are getting pretty good at this, but none of it would be possible without the enthusiastic participation of dozens of volunteers and the capable organizational talents of our festival coordinator, Trisha Kozloski. Our volunteer ranks were filled not only with shellfish lovers, growers and dealers, but also with friends, relatives, retirees, researchers, supporters, most of the Milford Lab staff and even a dedicated regulator.

Last year several carloads of volunteers were turned away by a massive, multi-car, fatal accident that closed Route 95 for hours. Those who did manage to avoid the epic traffic jam were severely overworked and came away hurting. Thankfully this year we had lots of people on the team, all pulling together and making for an enjoyable, if exhausting, weekend.

We were able to trim the waiting time for those standing in line substantially (from as long as two hours last year, to under 30 minutes this year) by hiring ten more professional shuckers than we had last year. Those 28 professionals came from as far away as Toronto and New Orleans, and everywhere in between. Collectively they shucked just under two per second, working pretty much non-stop for about six hours straight.

For our shucking contest we had a record 19 contestants. The thankless and delicate task of judging the shucking contest was handled by the discriminating and well-trained eyes of Richard Rush, of Oyster Aficionado fame (www.facebook.com/oysterspeak), and Kristin DeRosia-Banick of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture.

In the final heat, which included contestants with the best scores in the preliminary heats, only 11 seconds separated the first-place and third-place finishers.

The champion and winner of our \$1,000 top prize was David Burns, representing Rodney's Oyster House in Toronto. Coming in second was James Geoghegan from



JULIE QIU/INAHALFSHELL.COM

For the first time ever the festival featured a tent dedicated to Connecticut shellfish, under the Conn. Dept. of Agriculture's Connecticut Grown branding.

Brooklyn, N.Y. Third place went to Matt Dobby, also from Rodney's.

Because he was the top-placing American shucker, ECSGA and the Milford Festival will sponsor Geoghegan to represent us at the national oyster-shucking championships in St. Mary's, Md., in October. 2015 festival contest winner Charlie Larkin, from Noank, Conn., was recruited to drive to Boston to retrieve an errant pallet of shellfish at midnight on Friday.

Running on just a couple of hours sleep, he nevertheless rallied to work all day Saturday shucking and still managed to compete well. Many of the growers stepped up to help shuck

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Aquaculture Research at Federal Labs: Where Has All the Money Gone?

This summer I was asked to help conduct a review of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) aquaculture science programs. This was the first time the science of the aquaculture programs had undergone a formal outside review.

I worked with five scientists (mostly federal employees) on the review team and we took four days to tour the facilities and listen to presentations from each of the principle investigators. The rest of the team went to the West Coast to review their aquaculture science programs, but I was unable to join them.

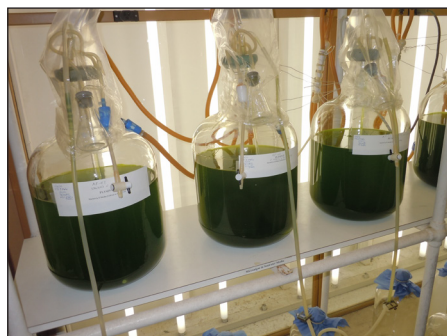
On the East Coast NOAA's aquaculture program is conducted in two facilities. Most of you are probably familiar with the work done at NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service lab in Milford, Conn., but I suspect many of you (like me) were largely unaware of work being done at the National Ocean Science (NOS) lab in Beaufort, N.C. The NEFSC has several other facilities (in Narragansett, R.I.; Sandy Hook, N.J.; Woods

Hole, Mass.; Gloucester, Mass.; and Orono, Me.), but the focus of the work in those other locations is fisheries-related.

The tour of the Milford Lab revealed much that I already knew. The lab is aging, but still functional, and has some excellent and unique facilities and equipment. The staff there continues to do good work, despite severe budget cuts; our industry relies heavily on the algal collection and algal culture training provided by Dr. Gary Wikfors. The aquaculture industry continues to reap the benefits of the Milford lab's research on larval and adult feeding biology,

probiotics, ecosystem impacts of mechanical harvest, ecosystem services rendered by aquaculture and nitrogen uptake by shellfish (to name just a few). Any grower worth his salt has attended at least some of the last 36 annual Milford Aquaculture Seminars organized by the lab.

Over the past eight years NMFS has severely curtailed funding for the lab while reassigning aquacul-



MARK DIXON NOAA/NMFS

Above, 20-liter carboys of the high-lipid microalgae *Tetraselmis* strain PLY-429 are grown under sterile conditions at the NOAA Fisheries lab in Milford, Conn. This strain has proven to be a valuable food for cultured shellfish.

Scientist from the Milford lab have been working closely with the regional aquaculture industry for decades. Many of the techniques used by shellfish growers today were developed at the Milford lab.

ture researchers to work on fisheries observer data and stock assessments. The lab has suffered brain drain, sustaining steady losses of personnel due to budget cuts and retirements; only one new scientist has been hired to backfill these losses. The net result has been a 30-percent decline in the number of aquaculture scientists, coupled with a 35-percent cut in funding. The morale of the remaining staff is understandably low, and there is a lot of underutilized capacity at the lab.

The last scientist doing fish culture research retired this year; entire buildings and labs sit unused. The Milford Lab boasts hot and cold running seawater, three Coulter counters (used to count and size particles in solution), a research vessel, tanks and culture facilities of every imaginable size, and

a greenhouse for algal culture. Sadly, many of these resources sit idle, since there are so few scientists left to do the work and very little funding support.

Our team was also asked to evaluate the aquaculture work being done at the NOS lab in Beaufort, N.C. That work is being coordinated by Dr. James Morris, and focuses largely on big-picture issues such as the use of large data sets to derive models, and the synthesis of data to guide regulatory policy. The Beaufort team has produced valuable synthesis documents on issues such as the interactions of aquaculture and protected resources, guiding regulators to the best available science so their rules are grounded in fact instead of fear.

I had a chance to see some of this

— Continued on page 14



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Help Us Help You: Join the ECSGA

Supporting the ECSGA by being a member is good for your business and good for our industry as a whole. Your membership dues helps pay for an executive director who looks out for your interests every day by working with regulators, educating lawmakers and helping the media get the story straight. Whether it's dealing with the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference, Food and Drug Administration, NOAA, the Army Corps of Engineers or even local regulators, the ECSGA is constantly striving to ensure that regulations are workable and rational.

Our Listserv has 650 subscribers, we reach more than 1,000 people on FaceBook and

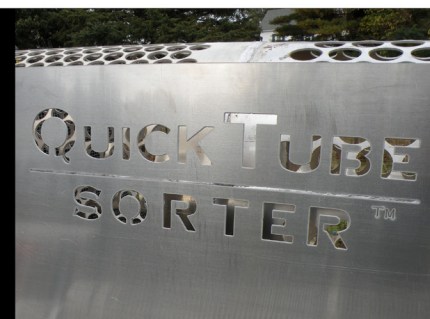
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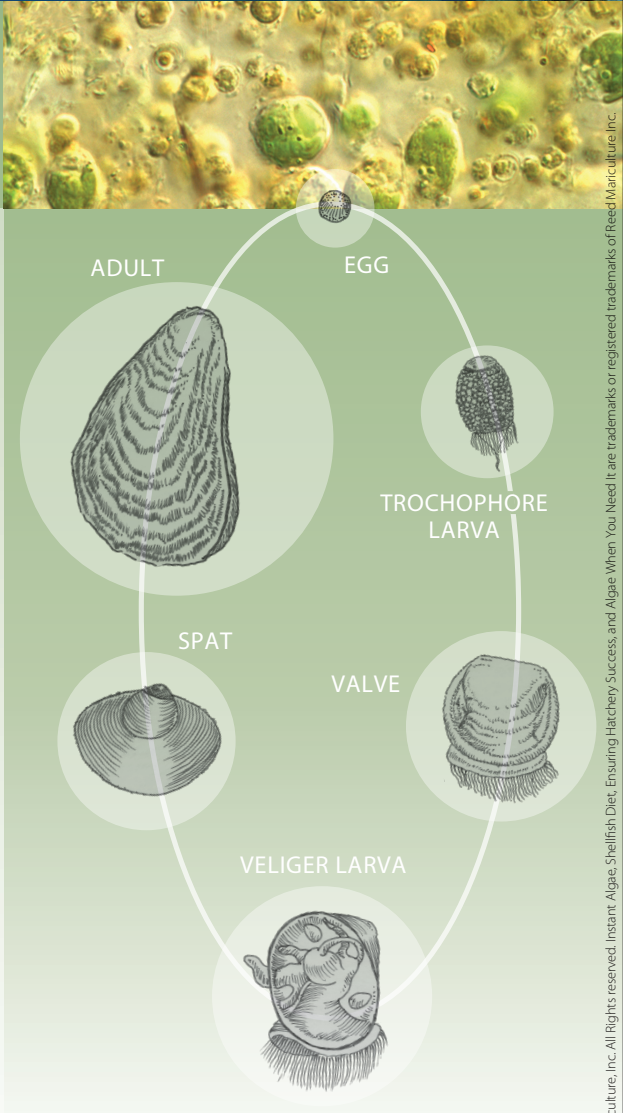
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Trouble in Paradise

by Mike Oesterling

Executive Director, Shellfish Growers of Virginia

While Virginia is undeniably the largest producer of cultured shellfish on the East Coast, with a supportive regulatory climate and extensive private leases, some of the state's growers continue to face pockets of resistance and the growing pains more typical of some less aquaculture-friendly states. Virginia's Lynnhaven River System, a tidal estuary that flows into the Chesapeake Bay, is one of those pockets. Leased oyster grounds within the Lynnhaven date back to the early 1900s, but over the years oyster production in the area declined. However, thanks to the development of disease-resistant brood stocks and improved grow-out technology, the Lynnhaven is enjoying a resurgence in oyster production.

Unfortunately, over the years when oyster culture was in decline, the upland character of the area changed from predominantly rural to highly-developed, expensive residential properties, setting the stage for classic user conflicts. These conflicts reached a crisis point in the summer of 2015 when elected officials began receiving complaints over the appearance of oyster grow-out cages in front of high-end waterfront homes.

Owners complained of inadequate notifications and a lack of input over the cage placements. When it appeared that legislative action might be imminent (including threats of a \$5,000/acre lease fee), the Virginia Marine Resources



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This 3.1-acre property with views of the Lynnhaven River and Chesapeake Bay lists for \$1.3 million. In recent years, the area has changed from mostly rural to more highly-developed, with waterfront homeowners clashing with oyster leaseholders.

Commission (VMRC) stepped in to take preemptive action.

Oyster resources within Virginia are managed both by the VMRC and by the General Assembly. The VMRC is charged with managing the natural resources of the Commonwealth (including both public bars and private leases), and tends to be supportive of commercial fisheries. In order to forestall legislative action, the VMRC enacted a six-month moratorium on

new leases in the Lynnhaven, and created the Lynnhaven River Oyster Work Group to work on resolving the conflicts.

The Work Group was composed of waterfront property owners, industry representatives, local residents, a marina owner, a representative from the local environmental group and a representative of the Virginia Beach Police Department. From the outset, it seemed clear that the shellfish growers were outnumbered and would likely bear the brunt of any proposed "solutions." The Work Group was not empowered to make any regulatory or legislative changes, only suggestions. It was tasked with focusing solely on the Lynnhaven, and was not to address broader statewide issues.

Industry went into the meetings with an open, compromising attitude, trying to rely on facts and not emotions. But right from the beginning, every option that was presented attacked the legal rights of commercial growers and furthered the "riparian rights" of property owners. It seemed clear that the property owners had no intention of compromising, but rather sought the total removal of oyster aquaculture from the waters in front of their homes.

Over the course of the summer, the Work Group met on numerous occasions to discuss various topics, including safety, notification and the preservation of areas for recreational users. The Work Group ended with a shopping list of ideas that may help alleviate the conflict, but reached consensus on only two items. First, the need to revise the notification process

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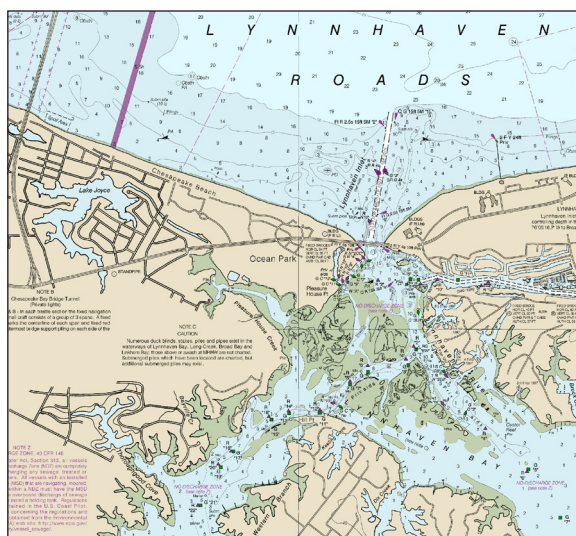
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Trouble in Paradise

for lease applications so it includes notifying adjacent leaseholders and upland landowners within a certain distance. Second, the need to include training about lease markings and aquaculture signage in mandatory boater safety classes.

The main “solution” to the conflicts would force any grower using bottom cages to reapply and notify upland property owners within 500 feet of the project. It would require growers using cages to obtain special permission and potentially to pay extra fees, and mandate precisely how cages would be identified and laid out in each lease. The downside of this proposal is that even existing leaseholders must apply for approval to use cages, and no application is assured of approval. If this “solution” is adopted it is possible or likely that some existing growers may have to remove their gear.

Additional “solutions” addressed potential



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The Lynnhaven River System has historically been a productive oyster tributary. According to the VMRC, “there were 986 acres of Public (Baylor) Grounds within the Lynnhaven River until 1936, when all such grounds were removed by the General Assembly. Since that time active leasing within the Lynnhaven River has been the norm.”

“buffer zones,” variations on the regulatory language, reserving areas strictly for recreational use, and mechanical harvest restrictions. In August the VMRC heard a detailed presentation on the proposals and scheduled a public hearing for September 27 to discuss all the proposed solutions. The commissioners will be able to choose which measures (if any) to enact after hearing the public testimony, but they will likely have a difficult decision to make. Inaction by the VMRC may trigger legislative action that could be worse.

While the current conflicts are centered in the Lynnhaven River system, fears run high that the dispute may spill over to other parts of Virginia where oyster aquaculture is expanding into waters ringed with expensive waterfront property. Stay tuned.

The VMRC prepared a presentation for the April 2016 Working Group meeting and posted it at: www.mrc.virginia.gov/Notices/2016/2016-04-15-Lynnhaven-work-group-presentation.pdf



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Hurricane Hermine

how you can help in the recovery.

Two overriding concerns come to mind. The first is that those structures that were built on ground level and suffered significant structural damage will probably need to be rebuilt on stilts. Locals are concerned that only rich tourists will be able to afford to rebuild, and that the character of this small, clam-farming town may be swamped by an influx of people who don't appreciate the history and charm of this unique community of 800 residents.

My second concern is that as our industry grows, we will invariably see more storms wreaking havoc on marine farms. We need to work with federal agencies to develop a turn-key disaster recovery plan responsive to local needs. Farm Service Agency crop insurance coverage is hardly enough to buy new seed, much less recover the gear and infrastructure that we depend on. We shouldn't have to reinvent this process with each new storm; it seems like something the aquaculture associations should be working on.

For more info, contact Leslie Sturmer, LNST@ufl.edu, or (352) 543-5057; or Rose Cantwell, Cedar Key



PAT BONISH/BONISH STUDIO

Mayor Heath Davis inspects 2nd Street in Cedar Key, Fla., on September 1. Along with his father, Davis owns and runs the family business, [Cedar Key Seafarms](http://CedarKeySeafarms.com), which grows and wholesales clams and oysters.

Aquaculture Association, cantwellr@bellsouth.net or (352) 543-6346.

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Hurricane Hermine Recovery Plan for the Cedar Key Shellfish Aquaculture Industry

Crop Losses – Currently, clam growers are eligible for financial assistance through the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency. Cultured oysters were not eligible for NAP coverage in 2016, but will be for the 2017 crop year.

Needs: Presidential declaration of disaster for Levy County; more trained loss adjustors.

Lease Markers – The industry was in the process of replacing lease markers with new signage required by the U.S. Coast Guard. Many signs and PVC pipe pilings were lost.

Needs: State assistance to replace signage and markers in lease areas.

Cleanup of Farm Gear and Marine Debris – In the 2004-2005 hurricane years the state allocated funding for cleanup of marine debris in the Indian River lagoon. New funding is needed to conduct a large-scale cleanup of the entire coastline, and to establish a community- and industry-based adopt-a-shoreline program for long-term maintenance.

Needs: State funding for initial cleanup efforts and rental of shore-based waste containers.

Rebuilding Infrastructure The most compelling need is to rebuild the shore-based infrastructure that supports the farming industry: hatcheries, land-based nurseries, aquaculture docks and processing plants were all impacted by storm surge and hurricane-force winds. Seed is needed immediately so that growers can begin replanting. Many may not have the resources to rebuild, since they'll likely have to comply with current building codes and FEMA regulations. Shellfish farming must remain a viable industry in Cedar Key, thus ensuring it stays a working-waterfront community and not just another Florida condominium haven.

Needs: Federal assistance to fund rebuilding efforts.



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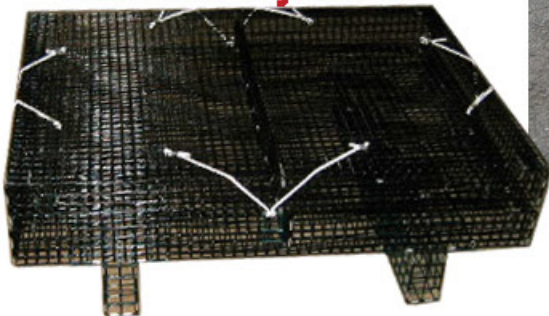
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What's Happening in D.C.?

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

With all the noise about the looming presidential election most people are probably sick of hearing about politics, but despite partisan gridlock, some things still get done. I recently traveled to D.C. for a couple of events right after Congress returned from their seven-week summer recess.

At the request of Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy, I shucked a pile of Copps Island Oysters with Deborah Pratt for Discover Connecticut Day. These events are opportunities for senators to show off some of their state's



MARGARET A. PILARO BARRETTE/PCSGA

The PCSGA and the Brewer's Caucus joined ECSGA when they met with the Congressional Shellfish Caucus. Left to right are Greg Dale, Pacific Seafood; Calif. Rep. Mike Thompson, caucus co-chair; Bill Dewey, Taylor Shellfish; Conn. Rep. John Larson, caucus co-chair; Bob Rheault, ECSGA.



COURTESY OF THE SENATE PHOTO STUDIO

Left to right, Bob Rheault, Sen. Richard Blumenthal and Deborah Pratt get ready to for the reception at Discover Connecticut Day in the U.S. Senate.

signature products. Sen. Murphy sits on the Appropriations Committee and has been supportive of efforts to save the Milford Lab and to fund water quality improvement efforts in Long Island Sound.

At the event I had a good chat with Maryland Senator Ben Cardin (read about his YouTube video on p. 14), thanking him for his efforts to straighten out Army Corps permitting issues in his state. It is always good to touch base with these folks (and especially their staff) to get back on their radar. They deal with dozens of issues every day and if you don't keep pushing, yours will likely sink to the bottom of the pile.



The next day we joined the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association (PCSGA), who had arranged for a hearing with the Army Corps Directorate to address why they had not gotten a permit through the Seattle District in nine years. Rep. Mike Thompson and the Congressional Shellfish Caucus requested the meeting, and eight members of Congress attended. Rep. Denny Heck from Washington state and Rep. Don Young from Alaska led the attack with others chiming in from the Gulf and California. We don't really have issues with Corps permitting in most districts, but Seattle and Baltimore have been problematic for years.

Corps Major General Ed Jackson took the heat for over an hour and then said he wanted to take responsibility and be held accountable. He suggested that he would look into the matter and come back to Congress in two or three months with concrete solutions. I like the sound of this and look forward to seeing some progress in a few months.

Wednesday evening we held a Caucus Reception with the PCSGA and the Brewers' Caucus.

I was able to pigeonhole several Congressmen and their aides, asking folks to refocus on our issues. Special thanks to Tal Petty and Johnny Shockley for bringing oysters and shucking, to John and Cindy West for donating oysters that I carried down, and to Mike Oesterling for coming in to help.

One of the issues we have been carrying to D.C. for years is the six-year old embargo on trade with the EU. We had received assurances that the FDA was going to announce a settlement in the Federal Register "this summer." Recently I talked to the man in charge and he said the timetable had been pushed back to "this fall." I asked Congressman Larson to write another letter to the FDA to keep the pressure on. Meanwhile Senator Murphy's staff has written a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative asking for help in resolving the issue. With all of the anti-trade and anti-globalization talk in the election news it is unlikely that significant trade pacts are going to resolve this for us, but it can't hurt to keep the pressure on.





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— Continued from page 2

Milford Wrap-Up

when the crowds peaked or when the pros needed to take a breather.

Julie Qiu (of *In A Half Shell* fame) was Instagramming the event for all who couldn't be there. She posted an awesome time-lapse shot of a dozen shuckers trying to keep up with the crowds at the *Connecticut Grown* tent. (Visit www.instagram.com/p/BJV0mzpBhsw/?taken-by=inahalfshellblog)

I'd like to extend a huge thank-you to all our members who stepped up and made donations of product, including (roughly from north to south): Tonie Simmons of Muscongus Bay Aquaculture, Bill Mook of Mook Seafarm, Al Surprenant of Cape Cod Shellfish, Alex Hay of Wellfleet Shellfish, Ben Lloyd of Pangea Shellfish Co., John and Cindy West of Cedar Island Oyster Co., Dave Roebuck of Salt Pond Oyster Co., Perry Raso of Matunuck Oyster Bar, Rob Krause of Ninigret Oyster Farm, Nick Papa and Jim Arnoux of East Beach Oyster Co., Matt Behan of Behan Family Farm, Jeff Gardner of Watch Hill Oysters, Jim Markow and Steve Plant of the Noank Aquaculture Co-operative, Chuck Viens of Charles Island Oyster, Norm and Jimmy Bloom of Norm Bloom and Son, Tom Kehoe of K&B Shellfish, Brian Harmon (Cape May Salts), Dale Parsons of Parsons Seafood, Bill and Lori Mayer of Clamdaddys, Pete McCarthy of Pete McCarthy Wholesale Clams, Johnny Shockley of Hoopers Island Aquaculture, Tal Petty of Hollywood Oyster Co. and the Croxtons of Rappahannock River Oyster Co.

Special thanks to Nancy Folini and Joe Gilbert of Briapatch Enterprises who shared product, reefer space, and a reefer truck; to Norm and Jimmy Bloom, who shared a mountain of Copps Island Oysters; to Connecticut Shellfish Co. manger Mike Dowie, who helped us coordinate product deliveries and lent us a reefer truck for the event; and to Robert Granfield for the use of his walk-in refrigerated trailer.



RICHARD RUSH

Left: Shucking contest champion David Burns (r), representing Rodney's Oyster House in Toronto is congratulated by ECSGA Secretary Ed Rhodes (l). Burns walked away with the top prize of \$1,000. James Geoghegan from Brooklyn took second place; third place went to Matt Dobby, also from Rodney's.

Right: The shucking contest is always a horse race. We had 28 professional shuckers come from as far away as Toronto and New Orleans and everywhere in between, and 19 of them competed. Only 11 seconds separated first place from third place. Shuckers are judged on speed and presentation. Points are deducted for not placing the oyster on the shell properly; presenting an oyster on a broken shell, or with grit, blood or another foreign substance on the flesh; a cut oyster; an oyster not completely severed from its shell.



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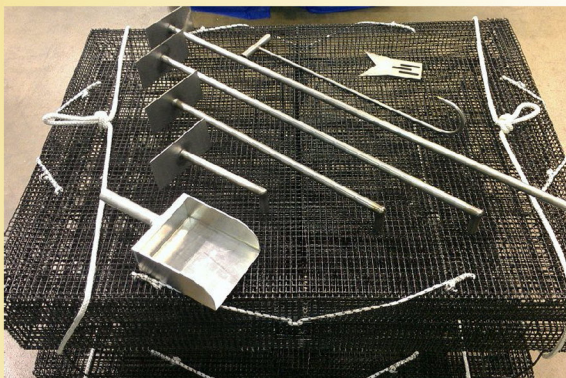
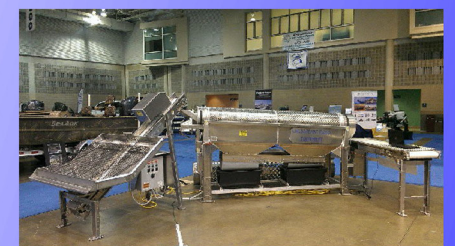
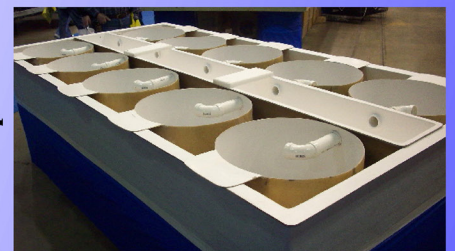
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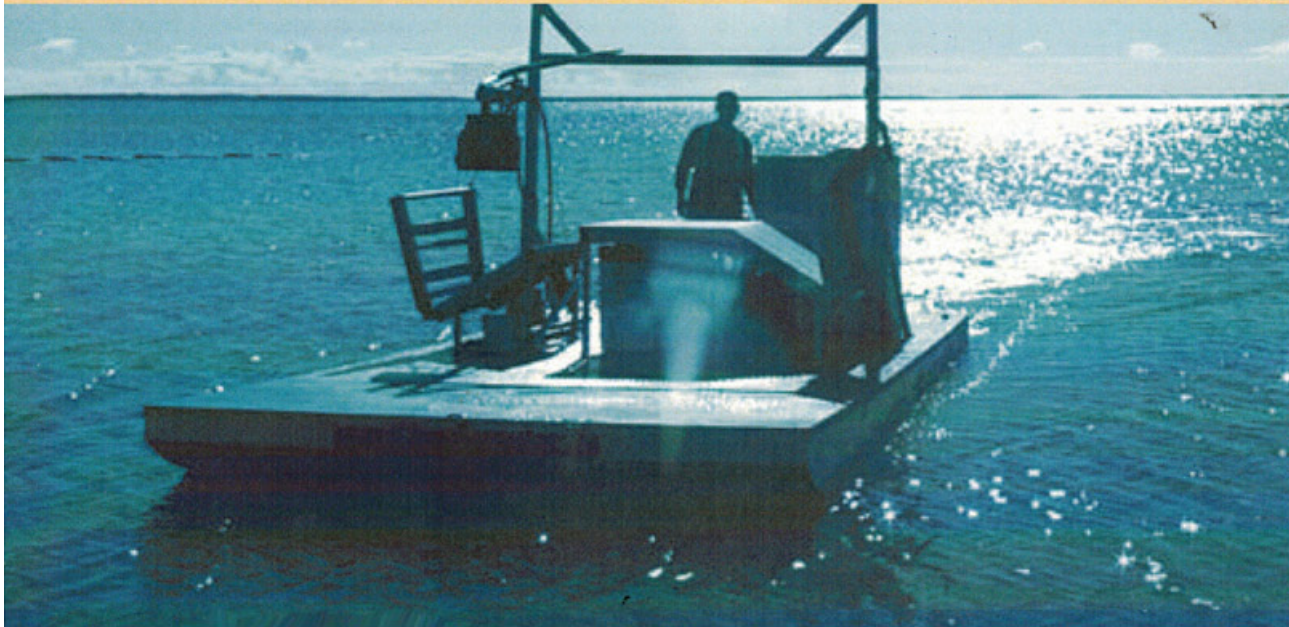
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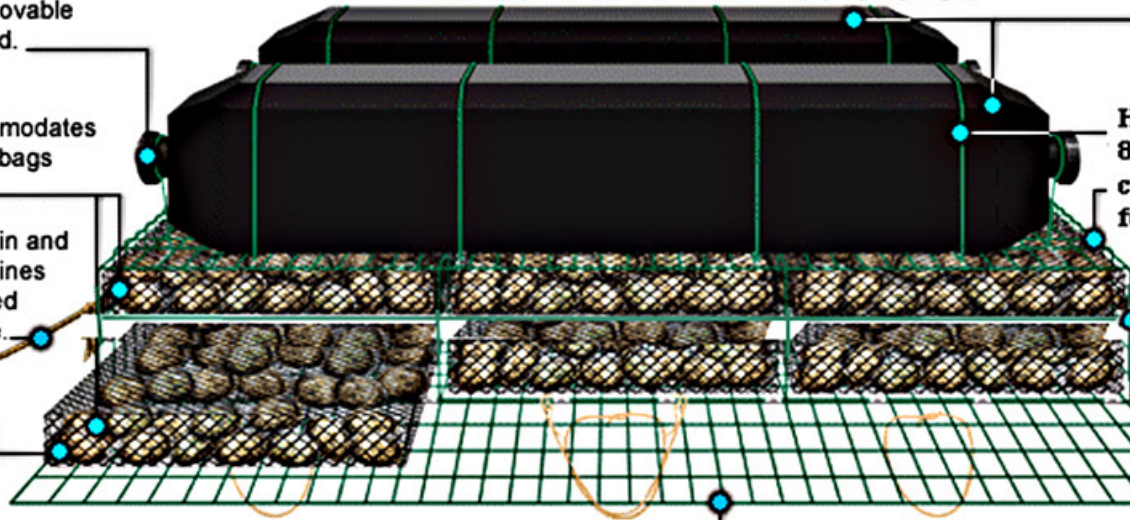
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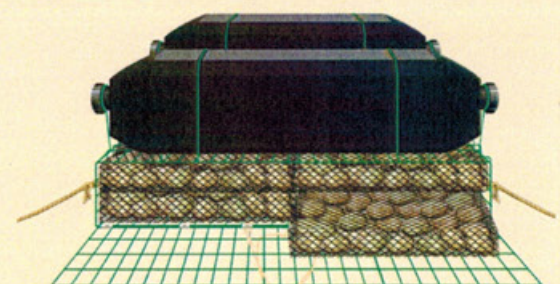
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— Continued from page 3
Federal Lab Funding Woes

work when I visited Dr. Morris’s lab earlier this year. In preparing for future fish farm applications as the Gulf of Mexico region gets ready to launch their new Aquaculture Fisheries Management Plan, scientists at the Beaufort lab have mapped all the competing uses, navigation lanes, fishing hot spots, oil platforms and pipelines in the Gulf. They have published recommendations for minimizing whale and turtle interactions and are readying a similar

document outlining how shellfish aquaculture and eelgrass can coexist. I see a huge value in these types of products.

I was pleased by the caliber of the work being done at our labs, but the unused space and the poor morale of the folks in Milford, who were hanging on watching as their coworkers were reassigned or retired, was difficult to see. Given the astonishing growth of shellfish aquaculture and the amount of lip service that NOAA pays our industry, it was discouraging to tally the declines in funding support for the Milford Lab.

The ECSGA has been working to solidify federal support for the Milford Lab, but Congress has not been able to help much. NOAA leadership does not see aquaculture research as a priority. NMFS spends less than one percent of its budget on aquaculture, concentrating dollars on stock assessments in response to pressure from fisheries groups and NGOs.

I feel as if the tide may be turning, and hope that aquaculture may soon be getting the attention it deserves. In the meantime, I will continue to travel to D.C. to push for more and better science funding to help address the many critical research needs we face.



Maryland Senator Ben Cardin has posted an informative YouTube video that manages to demonstrate the economic benefits of oyster production in 30 seconds flat. *Oysternomics 101*, says, “You start with a U.S. senator named Ben. By helping to restore thousands of acres of oyster beds, he kept hundreds of oystermen on the job, which keeps wholesalers in business. And that means more delivery companies making deliveries to more restaurants, which hire more workers, and that means more oystermen. It’s like he’s out here with us. He’s my friend, Ben. I hope he’s your friend, too.” Check it out for yourself at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hQyHHWLsOs

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— Continued from page 1
Shellfish Theft

30 percent said they had experienced occasional problems, while 20 percent were not sure. Almost a third said they would be willing to spend \$2,000 for an effective deterrent or a conviction.

The challenges in building monitoring systems are many. Some growers could rely on a land-based system, but many would need the equipment to operate remotely, floating offshore. Naturally, any equipment would need to be robust enough to withstand the punishing effects of the marine environment, and ideally should be effective in darkness and fog. To prove that a violator was harvesting within the confines of a lease and actually get a conviction, it would likely be necessary to discern boat numbers and to present a video recording to law enforcement authorities. In many cases a grower's only recourse is to rely on understaffed marine patrols that may have very long response times following a complaint.

I looked into a land-based radar system from KelvinHughes.com that looks as if it would be up to the task of detecting a boat on a lease under almost any conditions, but it comes with a hefty price tag of more than \$20,000. One of our members has installed a high-resolution web cam on his dock that provides remarkable color images of his lease, day or night, from a mile away. He can remotely pan and zoom, and the camera can identify vessels and even individuals in starlight or daylight. Again, the downside is affordability: the starlight cameras start at \$19,000 (UnitedVisionSolutions.com),

making these solutions affordable only for large firms, or perhaps by groups of growers working in close proximity.

A few months ago I talked about the needs of our industry with a firm in Fall River called Aquabotix, which designs underwater cameras and has developed a system for monitoring leases above water. The AquaLens Connect boasts a full 1080p HD camera with pan/tilt and recording capability. In addition, multiple cameras can be connected together through the Aquabotix control application to create a security network of underwater and surface cameras. The camera costs only \$1,500 and is designed to withstand full submersion, so water

is not a problem. Add in the price of a phone hotspot and some batteries, and you could probably deploy a system for under \$2,000. They will be rolling out their new system in Canada later this month, and hope to be displaying their wares at the Northeast Aquaculture Conference

and Expo (NACE) that will be held in Providence, R.I., January 11-17, 2017 (visit www.northeastaquaculture.org). Check out AquaLens Connect at Aquabotix.com.

If you have computer and camera skills you should be able to cobble together a system for even less money. Kyle Hess of Chessawanock Island Oyster Co. in Rhode Island put together a solar-powered camera that includes a Geovision GV-BX220D box-camera housed in a watertight enclosure. Kyle recommends using a 5-megapixel camera at minimum.

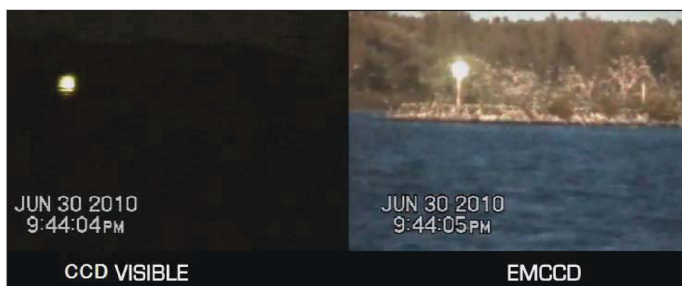
Others have suggested placing a simple infrared-activated game camera on access roads to catch land-based thieves as they come and go,

as long as you know how they are accessing your site. One enterprising grower has even used a drone to survey his lease, and is working on a mechanism to trigger an alert when someone transits his lease so he knows when to fly it. I would think that a high-powered, highly-focused spotlight might be enough to chase off most would-be thieves, if you could figure out a way to have it come on at the appropriate time and focus the beam on the intruder.

Judging from the amount of e-mail I've received on this topic, I can tell it's a high-priority issue for our community. The subject may be addressed in a session at NACE in Providence in January. Just one more good reason to make plans to attend.

On a related topic, I recently heard a member complaining that he was taking heat from other growers because he was selling to a restaurant that was thought to be involved in an oyster theft incident earlier this year. He pointed out that the alleged thief was no longer associated with the restaurant, and that, "besides, they pay well," and it was simply "a business decision."

I am hardly the arbiter of morality here, but it is my opinion that if your business decisions have the appearance of supporting thieves and scofflaws, then don't be surprised if others hold you accountable for the appearance of not caring about your fellow growers. Our industry is stronger when we work together and support each other as a community.



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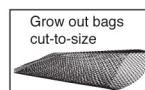


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