

INFORMATIONAL MINUTES  
**VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD (VMPB)**  
**VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE (VIMS)**  
**WATERMEN'S HALL, DIRECTOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**GLOUCESTER POINT., VA**  
**AUGUST 18, 2015**

**Call to Order:** Chairman Erskine called the meeting to order at 4:45 PM. Five board members were present which did not represent a quorum. This meeting is informational only.

**INTRODUCTIONS:**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

A.J. ERSKINE  
KELLY MINOR  
BILL PURCELL  
MEADE AMORY  
HEATHER T. LUSK

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

JOHN D. GRAY  
CAMERON CHALMERS  
DAN KAUFMAN  
PETE NIXON  
KEVIN WADE  
CLARKE MORTON

**STAFF PRESENT:**

MIKE HUTT, VMPB  
RICK BARLOW, VMPB

**GUESTS PRESENT:**

KIM HUSKEY-Virginia Seafood Council  
BOB FISHER – VIMS  
MELISSA BALL – Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS)

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**New Position – VMPB**

Mike Hutt welcomed Rick Barlow and introduced him to the Board. Rick serves as the PR & Marketing Specialist and will absorb duties from Joe Cardwell and Cheron Bright's positions. Rick comes to the VMPB from Colonial Downs where he was the Director of Operations for online wagering. He has a degree in Business Administration from VCU and has 9 years of experience in the seafood industry.

**Seafood Expo North America (Formerly the International Boston Seafood Show) – Boston, MA – March 13-18, 2015**

Mike attended and exhibited a variety of fish and crab products as well as other shell fish. Deborah Pratt was present shucking oysters and sampling. David Wong, VDACS' Hong Kong representative assisted in manning the booth. Dan Kauffman from Virginia Tech also attended. Over 60 trade leads were generated, which was down slightly from the previous year. Trade leads were sent out to the industry within 1 month after the show. Staff secured space for the 2016 show in March. VDACS has agreed to pay both space. Travel and staffing charges (staff, shuckers and chefs) will be the paid from VMPB funds.

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**SUSTA Conference – New Orleans, LA – April 7 – 10, 2015**

Mike Hutt attended the conference where they reviewed projects for current year and started to develop projects for 2016. Mike will be submitting proposals to SUSTA for the Seafood Expo Global and Asian Seafood Expo for 2016. He anticipates enough company interest to move forward with the projects.

**Seafood Expo Global (Formerly European Seafood Expo) – Brussels, Belgium – April 21-23, 2015**

Mike Hutt attended this expo which was paid for by SUSTA (no cost to VMPB). There was great interest in scallops and squid. Companies from Africa were interested in under-utilized fish species, Spot, Croaker and Porgy. There is still a ban on shellfish in the European Union (EU). Mike will meet with NOAA, Department of Commerce and is working on getting the ban lifted. This is a political issue and there is still great interest in our oysters and clams in Europe.

**Oyster Promotion – Montreal, Canada – May 2015**

Argyle, VDACS' consultant in Canada, organized this promotion in coordination with VMPB. Mike worked with Profishionals, Montreal's major oyster and shellfish distributors to carry out Virginia Oyster Night at an open air market. They selected three Virginia oysters to highlight. Promotions focused on half shell oysters and some shucked oyster products. While the products were initially very well received, there has been little follow up business. This distributor may not be the right partner for the Canadian market. VMPB will continue to work with Argyle to further develop the Canadian market for oysters.

**Virginia Tourism Virginia Seafood Promotion, Media Event – May 13, 2015 – Portsmouth, Virginia**

Three different oyster companies were selected to attend and showcase product at this event with Mike Hutt. Deborah Pratt attended and shucked oysters. This event offered good exposure to Virginia Oysters and VMPB received great feedback while at the venue. Little follow up media coverage has occurred. Board member Heather Luck reiterated that it was a lovely event on the water and has also not seen follow up media.

**Yorktown Farmers Market – August 29, 2015 and September 26, 2015**

The August 29 promotion at the Yorktown Farmers Market did not work out due to lack of planning by the farmers market with busy season. September 26<sup>th</sup> is still on the books and Mike will be working with Don Willis to discuss what they want to promote at this Farmers Market.

**Seafood Expo Asia – Hong Kong – September 8-10, 2015**

This is another SUSTA funded activity with no expenses to the Board. It is a three day show in Hong Kong and RRO from Virginia will be exhibiting with VMPB. All trade leads will come back and be distributed to the industry.

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**America's Food & Beverage Show – Miami, FL – October 26 – 27, 2015**

This represents the 5<sup>th</sup> year VMPB has participated in this show. VDACS has a pavilion there and we exhibit a full line of products under their umbrella. This year we do not have a company from Virginia attending with us. In the past we have realized good trade leads from this show. All trade leads will be distributed from this event to the industry.

**VA Oyster Trail – November 2015**

The opening of the Virginia Oyster Trail is on schedule for November 2015. They will be approaching industry in the near future for participation (for which there is no fee). Mike indicated that the VMPB has brochures for the Oyster Trail. Mike informed the Board them that the Virginia Oyster Trail will need to fund the cost of brochures.

**Virginia Seafood Week General Assembly 2016**

VMPB has secured dates for highlighting the seafood industry at the 2016 General Assembly Session. Mike will be sending those dates out to the Board and the industry. They will do a seafood luncheon on the GAB grounds on Wednesday. It is an excellent opportunity for public relations. Mike is hopeful that Kim Huskey will be available to help even though at that point she will be retired from the Virginia Seafood Council.

**Ray Grant – Refund to Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC)**

The Cownose Ray Grant from the VMRC expired in February 2015. Little over 22,000.00 has been returned to VMRC. Wegmans carried the ray a few times, and orders have not panned out in 2014 & 2015. One customer was interested in a 25,000 lb. order that did not materialize due to lack of capital funds for processing equipment. At this point all of VMPB's grant money from VMRC has been spent or returned. Mike has looked into other grant opportunities, most of which require matching funds that are not available. Mike has asked VMRC if the remainder of the Cownose Ray monies could be applied towards a Blue Catfish grant. Commissioner Bull stated the returned monies were already earmarked and that at this time there are no more grants available. In a similar thread, Chairman Erskine noted that the ray issue came up at VMRC with regard to certain harvest methods, specifically bow hunting. Videos came out of Maryland of bow hunting of Cownose ray. Mike indicated that he had been contacted by the media and he made it very clear that the Virginia Marine Products Board is in no way involved in bow hunting tournaments for Cownose ray.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Ambassadors' Event @ Governor's Mansion - May 28, 2015**

VMPB was invited to shuck half shell oysters at this event. Kim Huskey and Deborah Pratt attended. There were 20-30 ambassadors from foreign countries. The Governor was enthusiastic about our presence. Secretary Haymore was also in attendance. At this event Kim Huskey introduced a "Virginia Seafood of the Month" idea to the Mansion's Executive Chef who was very receptive. There would also be an educational component in addition to the product. Since the event, the chef has been replaced and

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efforts will be made to reach out to the new Executive Chef and further discussions about such an effort.

**VDACS – Consultant Tour**  
**European Union - June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

Andrew Brown, VDACS European Market Consultant was in the U.S. for meetings with VDACS and Virginia ag producers. Mike took him around to various plants. There is a strong market for scallops in Europe. Andrew is doing work on under-utilized species and is trying to get some interest in this area.

**Hong Kong — June 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.**

Mike Hutt and David Wong (VDACS Hong Kong Consultant) traveled to Virginia producers who are interested in exporting live oysters. Mike educated David on the companies, the owners and products. David is currently setting up meetings for the Asian Seafood Show in September.

**Websites**

Rick Barlow has updated the Marine Products Board website with current events, meeting minutes and notices as well as the aquaculture oyster directory. Stratum is the PR Firm that currently updates our sites. Mike has informed Stratum that we will not be renewing contract as Rick will maintain these. This will allow us to realize a savings of approximately \$5,000 per year and give us better and more immediate control over content.

**Social Media**

Rick gave a demonstration of social media initiatives adopted by other boards and commissions around the country. He highlighted important factors such as target audience and platform. It was noted that as an Industry Board, it is important that what is posted does not show partiality to one company over another. Chairman Erskine recommends that staff move forward in social media, starting with Facebook. Heather Lusk recommends starting with Facebook and moving on to Twitter and Instagram. Plenty of Virginia companies are using social media. One of our goals should be to post as much content as possible and make efforts to follow chefs, post pictures, etc.,. By nature of social media you will be recognizing Virginia Companies. Staff will move forward developing a social media campaign. This is a way to keep Virginia seafood in front of the public.

**Mariner's Museum – “Bay on your Plate”**

Mike Hutt and Kim Huskey met with Kimberly DuBois to discuss the Mariner Museum's Bay on your Plate event that is geared towards oysters and crabs. They are in search of sizeable sponsors. Mike Hutt informed them that VMPB does not have any money to donate, but that the Board could provide promotional and educational materials.

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**INTERESTED PARTY REPORTS**

**Virginia Institute of Marine Science**

Bob Fisher (VIMS) discussed the electro shock fishery of blue catfish, which is in its second year of study. VIMS has received a lot of negative comments and calls from commercial fishermen indicating that electroshock is negatively impacting their catch rates. Bob has talked to buyers of catfish and that does not seem to be the case as to what is being brought to the docks. Trying to build a sustainably fishery for this product. electroshock has its limitations (cold weather). Since the last 2 years of electroshock we have seen the catfish market expand and various size that are marketed. Bob opened up the stomachs of the Blue Catfish (6) for the reporter and found an assemblage of native species, 1 American eel, 2 blue Crabs, 2 menhaden, 1 croaker, 6 spot. DGIF has informed Bob of specific threats from public. Blue Catfish are beginning to come into the saltier waters. Out of the 1,000 catfish caught by electroshock, they have counted 5 native white catfish. Meade Amory indicated that this is not necessarily a new species. Blue Catfish is a better species. Blue Catfish outnumber Native White Catfish. Meade quoted catfish fishermen (John Ivy) that "electroshock fishing is hurting his catch". They see electroshock fishing as a threat.

**Virginia Tech:** Not Present

**Virginia Marine Resource Commission:** Not Present

**Virginia Seafood Council**

The Legislative Reception will be held January 27 at the Hilton Garden Inn. Congressional Staff Tour – Mariners Museum for Senator Frank Wagner. AJ Erskine announced that Kim Huskey will be retiring from the Virginia Seafood Council at the end of September. The entire board congratulated her on her years of service and recognized all that she has done for the industry.

**VSC Congressional Staff Tour August 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**(Virginia Marine Products Board was not present for this event)**

Kim Huskey offered a big thank you to Mike Hutt for making lodging arrangements for the group of Congressional Staffers. They traveled to J&W, Kellum and Oyster Seed Holdings and it was quite an educational experience. This tour was put together to highlight the significance of H2B. (Go into more depth here – just briefly – what is H2B?) Johnny Graham came up to visit Staffers. Tommy Kellum picked the Staffers up and dredged some oysters. Kim stated the Staffers have advocates that can help the industry out with initiatives or issues that we are having. Mike iterated that hopefully this will help the industry with labor issues.

**COOPERATIVE PROGRAMS**

**Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services**

**Melissa Ball:** No Report

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**Mike Hutt:** Mike mentioned the support of VDACS and Melissa's contribution to the VMPB

**Aquaculture Oysters Update – Mike Hutt**

**Mike Hutt:** There is no more grant money for this effort. Aquaculture oyster is in great demand. Supply was stunted in the beginning of the year with the cold weather.

**REPORTS**

**Finance**

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| FY 2014 Carryover:    | \$155,558.04        |
| FY 2015 Revenue:      | \$339,028.31        |
| FY 2015 Expenditures: | \$226,695.82        |
| FY 2015 Year End Bal: | <u>\$267,890.53</u> |

Increase in license sales do not come to VMPB. If the board sees any programs we should do please let us know. The projected income for next year is \$299,191.17 based on last 3 years' average. This is up from previous years. Mike was reminded by VMRC that if license sales go up VMPB does not get increase.

**Public Comments**

**AJ Erskine:** We will take Meade's suggestion of directing Mike Hutt to go to VDACS and inquire about the split of licensee fees that VMPB receives and where in the code it states that we do not receive money from incremental increase in license amount.

**Kim Huskey:** The VSC members have requested that more marketing be focused on shucked oyster products.

**Mike Hutt:** Has spoken to two processors that believe the increase in shell product out of the Gulf we need to stay out front.

**AJ Erskine:** Believe a generic marketing program is what the shucked oyster market needs.

**Expenses for travel for Board Meeting**

**AJ Erskine:** Any Expenses for Travel please email to Rick or Mike.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**AJ Erskine:** Meeting Adjourned at 6:46 PM