From the President

Get Involved to Preserve Access to the Water

While headlines lament the lack of jobs, many of us in the aquaculture community believe that we could create many more jobs if the government would just get off our backs.

However, some degree of government oversight is necessary. One of our jobs at the ECSGA is to educate policy makers so that regulations address real problems as opposed to imaginary ones.

We in Virginia are fortunate to have regulators who recognize the value of shellfish aquaculture, allowing it to develop into a $30-million-a-year business. However, as we grow we continue to face regulatory challenges at every level.

One of the issues we are facing is the disappearance of commercial waterfront. Because so much of the commercial waterfront has been converted to condos, a startup business today is hard pressed to find suitable waterfront to land and process its product.

Many marinas do not allow commercial boats, or they increase their fees to drive us out. A deep-water site built by watermen on the Eastern Shore was turned into a National Wildlife Refuge, and now can only be used by recreational boaters.

Increasingly, growers are running into opposition at the local level. In some areas NIMBY-ism has progressed from individual complaints to entire counties looking to block aquaculture through zoning. These moves appear to be driven by an irrational fear of aquaculture.

I love to complain about the government, but it doesn’t accomplish much. To change things you actually need to get involved at your local and state levels. The ECSGA, together with our Gulf and Pacific partners, can have significant influence at the federal level, but we must also get involved in state and local issues.

Preservation of working waterfronts has been one of the ECSGA’s top priorities for years. We are actively supporting HR3109, the Working Waterfront Grant Program bill that is currently in Congress.

Get informed and get involved; if you can’t afford to go to DC to save your business, then please join us and support our efforts. Do what you can at your local level to preserve access to the water before it is too late. I’ve never heard of condos being torn down to put up a shellfish plant.
Almost 200 industry culturists, researchers and regulators gathered in Williamsburg on November 18 and 19 for the biennial Virginia Aquaculture Conference hosted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Thanks to the generosity of our many sponsors the conference was a huge success, with great presentations, trade show exhibits, industry networking and, of course, mingling over some topnotch Virginia-cultured seafood.

The conference served all aquaculture interests in Virginia including finfish, prawn and shellfish. With the state’s principal industry in hard clams and oysters, it’s no surprise that the vast majority of conference participants were from the shellfish culture sector, including some from outside the state and outside the country.

The conference was kicked off with a session titled; “The Basics of Shellfish Culture” that offered practical considerations for nursery, grow-out and marketing options. Gef Flimlin and Doug McMinn gave guidance on starting a new farm including: develop a sound business plan, don’t plant more than you can manage, and let your site-specific characteristics guide your choice of gear.

Bob Rheault emphasized passion and quality in his presentation on marketing, emphasizing the differences between selling and marketing. The second half of the day was devoted to a review of current shellfish regulations by representatives of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Virginia Department of Health – Shellfish Sanitation, and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Friday night’s gala seafood reception and trade show was a big hit. The tasty Virginia-cultured seafood products served included catfish, smoked trout, pompano, freshwater prawns, raw oysters, steamed clams and seafood chowder.

The trade show featured a mix of commercial vendors, trade organizations and government agencies. Commercial vendors showcased a variety of oyster culture gear, temperature monitoring devices, shellfish labeling products, shipping products and shellfish seed.

The plenary session examined issues of sustainable aquaculture at all scales — from global to local.

— Continued on page 9
Getting the Most Out of the ECSGA Listserv Email List

Most of you know that Listserv email-list-managing software is an amazing tool for disseminating information. What you may not realize is that the ECSGA List has grown over the years into a valuable educational resource.

It's very easy to access the searchable archive: just click on the big blue Join Listserv button on the ECSGA.org homepage and then click on:

http://listserv.uri.edu/archives/ecsga.html

This link takes you to a website where you can search the archives, join or leave the email list, or modify your personal settings.

If you wanted to search on “mud blister” or “salt dip” or “boring sponge,” you would click on Search the Archives, fill in your search terms, and read the collective wisdom of several years of discussions.

Or if you remember reading a post last year or many years ago, and can only remember the email of the author, it's easy to search on that e-mail address.

The ECSGA List has been operating since March of 2002. It's kind of fascinating to go back and follow some of the discussions from the early days — in some respects it is amazing to see how far we've come. It's also frustrating to see how our NIMBY issues remain nearly intractable.

— RBR

Upcoming Events in 2012

East Coast Commercial Fishermen's & Aquaculture Trade Exposition, Jan. 13-15, Ocean City, MD. Contact (800) 421-9176 or visit marylandwatermen.com.


Aquaculture America, Feb. 29 - March 2, Las Vegas, NV. Contact (225) 578-3137 or visit www.was.org.

International Boston Seafood Show/Seafood Processing America, March 11-13, Boston, MA. Contact (207) 842-5504 or visit www.bostonseafood.com.

Milford Aquaculture Seminar and ECSGA Annual Meeting, March 12-14, Westbrook, CT. Contact Lisa.Milke@noaa.gov or visit www.mi.nmfs.gov/seminarworkshop.html.

National Shellfisheries Association, March 25-29, Seattle, WA. Contact Sandra.shumway@uconn.edu or visit www.shellfish.org.

Links and more information available on the Events page at www.ECSGA.org
From the Mouth of the Bay
ISSC Biennial Meeting Wrap-Up

The Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) held its biennial meeting in Seattle during the first week of October. For those who may not be familiar with it, the ISSC is the cooperative program where members of industry, state health officials and federal authorities from FDA, NOAA and EPA meet to hash out the regulations on everything from shellfish tagging to harvest-area classification.

You may remember the furor raised at the ISSC meeting two years ago when the FDA shocked the conference by unilaterally deciding that the Gulf states would have to post-harvest treat all their oysters between April and November each year in an effort to reduce illnesses caused by the bacteria *Vibrio vulnificus*. (To read the whole story visit www.ECSGA.org and click on Vibrio Issues in the What’s New section of our home page.)

It is just this kind of unilateral action that the ISSC is supposed to avoid. Thankfully, this year’s meeting was not as contentious as the last. Nonetheless, participants still found plenty to argue about during the grueling week of meetings, with the issues surrounding naturally occurring *Vibrio* bacteria (both *V. vulnificus* and *V. parahemolyticus*) still dominating the discussions. The inch-thick set of proposals we debated resulted in mostly minor tweaks to the existing model ordinance; most of the industry probably won’t notice the changes that were adopted this year.

In the Vibrio Management Committee meeting the FDA revealed that deaths associated with *Vv* had not declined in the past year, and that the Gulf Coast industry had largely failed to implement the one-hour-to-refrigeration requirement that models had predicted would achieve the targeted illness reductions.

Efforts to install and improve refrigeration units on boats and in shore-side facilities were set aside when the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, leading to widespread non-compliance. Plans were developed to ensure these time-to-temperature controls are properly implemented and enforced during the 2012 season, and if successful we are still optimistic that the targeted 60 percent illness reduction will be achieved. Oddly, the FDA seems skeptical that this will work, in spite of the fact that we are using their Vv Risk Calculator to model this effect.

Some of the changes approved at this year’s conference were fairly esoteric. We decided to move from counting illnesses to a more scientific risk-analysis technique that calculates the risk per serving and attempts to achieve an illness rate reduction as opposed to a reduction in illnesses. The difference is subtle. The old method was problematic because the number of illnesses annually was so small that there was never any statistical certainty as to whether controls were effective or if reductions were due to random chance alone. Now that we are calculating risk per serving it becomes imperative that industry and the states work together to collect accurate monthly harvest data so we can document how many meals were eaten safely without incident.

Things got dicey when the Vibrio Management Committee discussed whether two more East Coast states were going to have to join the “club” of five Gulf Coast states that are required to have *Vv* management plans. According to existing rules, any state with more than two *Vv* illnesses since 1995 needs to implement controls such as seasonal closures, shorter times from harvest to refrigeration or mandatory post-harvest processing in order to bring their problem under control.

The regulations dictate that these illnesses must be traced to shellfish harvested in that state and must result in primary septicemia for the illness to count, but some health officials wanted to include cases that resulted in only gastroenteritis. Arguments went on for hours, and occasionally got heated and passionate, but in the end both states narrowly avoided being added to the “club.” The take-home message was clear: *Vv* is not just a Gulf Coast issue and states as far north as New England need to continue to improve their shellfish handling protocols…”

— Continued on page 8
Friends,
As we approach the holiday season I hope you are feeling in a festive and charitable mood. Entering the fourth quarter of our budget year, the ECSGA was running a $5,000 deficit, so we reactivated the Booster Club to try to stay in the black.

As of this writing, we have almost reached our goal of a balanced budget, thanks to those of you who have already stepped up to help out:

Tom Ahern, J.P. Shellfish
Bill Avery, Avery Quality Bay Clams
Cherrystone AquaFarm
Gef Flimlin, Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Ray Grizzle, Granite State Shellfish
Bob Ketchum, Ketcham Trap
Richard Phelps, Allen-Bailey Tag
Sandy Shumway, UCONN
Al Surprenant, Cape Cod Oyster Co.

Dot Leonard, Ocean Equities
Richard Rush, Oyster Information Newsletter

Thanks also to those of you who have pledged to help out.

If you are thinking about making year-end donations to your favorite charities, please consider making the ECSGA one of those causes this year by making a tax-deductible donation. Perhaps you might even consider doubling your dues. And if you know growers who are not yet members, ask them to join.

If you value our efforts to improve the regulatory environment
If you support our fight with the FDA to preserve your right to sell raw shellfish
If you value our educational efforts to raise awareness about Vibrio issues and to keep our shellfish safe
If you follow the Listserv or find our website useful
If you had a good year and are looking for a good, tax-deductible cause

Then please donate today by visiting our home page and clicking on the Booster Club button to be taken to our secure PayPal link.
The ECSGA is a 501-c6 non-profit trade organization. Fully 86 percent of your donation is tax deductible because this is the portion of our annual budget that supports non-lobbying functions.

We would love to add your name to the list of boosters on our home page in recognition of your support.

If you prefer, you can mail your check to:
ECSGA
1623 Whitesville Rd.
Toms River, NJ 08755

Thanks,
Bob Rheault
Executive Director, ECSGA
(401) 783-3360
bob@ecsga.org

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The 32nd Annual Milford Aquaculture Seminar: March 12-14, 2012

Always one of the best meetings of the year for growers wanting to learn how to improve their bottom line, the MAS will be held at a new location this year. The Water’s Edge Resort and Spa in Westbrook, Conn, is “a four-star resort” right off Rte. 95 with “a sweeping view of the sound.” The organizers have negotiated a great group rate: $99+tax (until Feb. 13) so it’s more affordable than ever.

The meeting opens on Monday evening, March 12 with a poster session and welcome reception.

Bill Dewey, of Taylor Shellfish Farms, Shelton, Wash, will be the keynote speaker on March 13, kicking off two full days of presentations focused on shellfish biology and aquaculture. This is a great opportunity for shellfish industry members, resource managers and scientists to meet and get caught up on the latest local aquaculture developments.

ECSGA members should make plans to attend our Annual Meeting after dinner on Tuesday evening, March 13. We will brief members on current issues, hold elections and ratify changes to our by-laws.

It's not too late to make your contribution to the program and submit an abstract! All shellfish aquaculture topics are welcome for talks or poster presentations. Abstracts are due by Jan. 6, 2012, and don’t forget to register by February 22, as fees increase after that date.

For information on abstract submission, registration, room reservations and cutoff dates, visit http://mi.nefsc.noaa.gov/seminarworkshop or contact Lisa Milke, (203) 882-6528 or Lisa.Milke@noaa.gov.

— Continued from page 4

ISSC Wrap-up

toxins so we can get away from injecting mice and use some of the new rapid test kits now available. These new tests should help detect algal toxins faster and with a greater degree of accuracy than the older “mouse bioassay.”

The Restoration Subcommittee adopted Best Management Practices following a year-long effort by Dot Leonard and Sandy MacFarlane to craft ways to minimize the risk to markets from these projects while maximizing their environmental and educational benefits.

Many proposals were sent back to committee for refinement and future consideration. I expect we will soon see changes to the tagging regulations that will improve trace-back and recall capabilities, and I predict that temperature recorders will soon be required on common carriers. The FDA is conducting a risk analysis for norovirus in all foods, and we will be hearing a lot more about this in years to come. The seven-day conference covered a lot more than I can note here, but you can get much more detail from www.ISSC.org. Thankfully we have a couple of years before we have to do this again.
George Chamberlain, President of Global Aquaculture Alliance, spoke about changing patterns in global seafood consumption and production. Nadine Bartholomew of the Good Foodie Organization and consultant to Food Marketing Institute’s Sustainable Seafood Group, discussed national trends in seafood consumption and marketing, and attitudes about sustainability.

Tom Murray of VIMS described some strategies that Virginia seafood farmers can use to educate consumers about the sustainability of aquacultured seafood products, while Karen Burns of the Virginia Aquarium described the Sensible Seafood program, which helps guide Virginia consumers and restaurants toward sustainable seafood options.

Saturday’s shellfish session had a national focus, beginning with status reports on the National Shellfish Initiative from Dr. Michael Rubin, and an ISSC update from Bill Dewey. The second half of the session was devoted to discussing post-harvest processing (PHP) of oysters. The 2009 FDA mandate still looms over Virginia and, like it or not, the Virginia industry may some day be required to institute PHP in the summer months.

National leaders from both the Gulf Coast and West Coast oyster industry were invited to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various validated PHP methods.

Mike Voisin of Motivatit Seafood explained high-pressure processing, John Tesvich of AmeriPure Oysters discussed low temperature pasteurization and Bill Dewey of Taylor Shellfish described individual quick freezing.

Each of these validated PHP methods significantly reduces the Vibrio counts, allowing producers to safely market shellfish from waters with high Vibrio loading. While they leave you with a dead oyster, the FDA maintains that the sensory characteristics are similar to fresh, raw shellfish.

Each of these methods has been in use for years in the Gulf, well before the FDA tried to require PHP for warm-water harvest. This was a unique opportunity for the Virginia industry to hear firsthand about these processes. The message was clear — adapting and diversifying is the best way to stay viable in this industry.
Hot off the Press!

*Shellfish Aquaculture and the Environment* is the first book to focus primarily on the issues surrounding environmental sustainability of shellfish aquaculture. Chapters cover the most current data available on key topics, such as resource enhancement, habitat restoration, eutrophication, the impacts of shellfish farms on water quality, and harvest methods.

The authors also discuss shellfish aquaculture and the environment from both industry and NGO perspectives. *Shellfish Aquaculture and the Environment* is sure to be an invaluable resource for those looking to develop and implement environmental best management practices.

Edited by Sandra E. Shumway, Ph.D, one of the world’s leading shellfish researchers, and with contributions from around the world, *Shellfish Aquaculture and the Environment* is the definitive source of information on this increasingly important topic.

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Did you know that for less than $2 each you can buy custom-imprinted, six-pack-sized, soft-sided insulated lunch boxes (along with a gel pac) so that customers can keep their shellfish purchases cool on the ride home?

Use the custom imprint to build brand awareness and reinforce your personal marketing message. Customers will be reminded of the importance of time-temperature control, and you could even sell them dirt cheap and make money on the deal!

And the best part is, if you can keep some shellfish from being abused you might actually prevent an illness that could be traced back to your shellfish!

[Internet vendor Marco-PromotionalProducts.com](http://www.Marco-PromotionalProducts.com) sells lunch totes for as low as $1.29 each (for 3,000). A Google search on “promotional lunch tote” will turn up plenty of other companies.
Mail Membership form and dues to:
ECSGA c/o
Gef Flimlin
RCE of Ocean County
1623 Whitesville Road
Toms River, NJ 08755

Annual Dues Schedule

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For advertising rate information contact Bob Rheault (401) 783-3360
Visit our web site: www.ECSGA.org.
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