Most of the east has been enjoying a mild fall. The prolonged growing season has been great, so I guess I shouldn’t complain about the hurricane that grazed New England on November 5th. More typical for this time of year the seafood market is in the tank. I always find it frustrating that our oysters are prime in the fall; plump, firm and sweet, but sales are anemic. I have to remind myself to be patient because by late winter we are always struggling to keep up with orders.

As we prepare for winter there are a flurry of meetings and workshops that growers need to be aware of and make time to participate in. World Wildlife is in the process of developing certification standards to improve the sustainability of our industry. They are hosting three “Molluscan Dialog” industry workshops on the east coast. We need to participate to ensure that these standards are workable and relevant.

Even if you believe (as I do) that we already have a pretty good reputation for sustainability and environmental stewardship, we need to be involved in the process to make sure this gets done right. Whether you like it or not, the certification process is going to go forward and we need to make sure that the standards are practical and realistic. Make plans to attend one of the Dialog workshops (the ECSGA annual meeting, January 19th, Atlantic Beach, NC; World Aquaculture, February 9th, in Orlando, FL; or National Shellfisheries April 6-10, 2008 in Providence, RI.)

Meanwhile, the ECSGA received NRAC funding to establish Best Management Practices for east coast growers. As our production numbers continue to grow we are coming under increasing regulatory scrutiny in several communities up and down the coast. We need to ensure that new growers share our ethic of environmental stewardship so they don’t spoil things for the rest of us. By creating industry-wide BMPs we hope can head off the need for onerous new regulations. Keep alert for a workshop in your neck of the woods and make a point of getting involved.

Perhaps most importantly, we will be making our annual trip to Washington, DC the week of January 21st. This is our opportunity to meet with our Congressional delegates to help them understand our top priorities. We have been making these trips for five years, joining our colleagues from the Pacific and Gulf Coasts. The National Fisheries Institute has proven invaluable on these trips as they help us schedule meetings with key legislators so we can maximize our impact. These meetings are always most effective when we can bring growers with us from every delegate’s district.

On the 23rd we will be hosting our Annual Congressional Reception. Every year this event grows in popularity (and cost). Last year we served shellfish to about 600 supporters including key Congressmen, the heads of several regulatory agencies and hundreds of Congressional aides. (These aides are often the ones we really need to connect with. These receptions give us a great opportunity to reinforce our message in a less formal setting and it helps to have lots of growers there to help us make our point. Every year our participation in this event has been largely subsidized by the Gulf
Oyster Industry Council who typically picks up the lion’s share of the tab. Now that our Association has been around for five years, we are expected to contribute a larger share of the substantial expenses for this event. Sponsors for the Reception include Shell Oil and Tabasco and we are actively seeking additional tax-deductible sponsorships.

Remember, we are a membership-based organization. We need members to be able to afford to do anything. If you know growers or dealers who have not yet joined us, please take a minute to tell them about a few of the important things we do.

Bob Rheault

NOAA Adopts 10-Year Plan for Marine Aquaculture

by Susan Bunsick

On October 30, 2007, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) finalized and adopted the 10-Year Plan for Marine Aquaculture as an agency-wide policy document. The plan is intended to guide the agency as it works toward establishing marine aquaculture as an integral part of the U.S. seafood industry and as a viable technology for replenishing important commercial and recreational fisheries. The plan provides specific goals for the NOAA Aquaculture Program and an assessment of the challenges the agency will face in its effort to reach its goals.

The goals in the 10-Year Plan are:
1. A comprehensive regulatory program for environmentally sustainable marine aquaculture;
2. Development of commercial marine aquaculture and replenishment of wild stocks;
3. Public understanding of marine aquaculture; and
4. Increased collaboration and cooperation with international partners.

More information and an electronic copy of the plan is available on the NOAA Aquaculture Program website at:

http://aquaculture.noaa.gov/about/tenyear.html

(If you plan to download the pdf of the plan, it works better via Mozilla than Explorer.)

Anyone interested in a hard copy of the plan should send their contact information in an e-mail to: NOAA.Aquaculture@noaa.gov.

Pay Your 2008 Dues On-line Now!

The ECSGA urges you to pay your 2008 dues on-line. If your membership has expired, you still pay now and be current through the end of 2008(!) We use a company called Count Me In (CMI) to provide on-line membership services, including the ability to pay your 2008 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.
As farm families gather throughout the United States this Thanksgiving to count their many blessings and give thanks for another successful harvest, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) urges them to ensure their farm or ranch is counted in the 2007 Census of Agriculture. The Census is a crucial tool that provides farmers with a voice in the future of their community and all of agriculture. And, yes, this includes shellfish farms.

Conducted every five years by the USDA, the Census is a complete count of the nation’s farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

“The Thanksgiving is the perfect time to remind farmers how important they are and how much the nation appreciates their hard work,” said NASS Administrator Ron Bosecker. “It’s also a good time to remind them that they have a voice and a responsibility to use that voice to make a better future. Tools like the Census enable farmers to help shape the future of agriculture and their local communities. To do this, we urge them to speak out and let their voices be heard by participating in the 2007 Census of Agriculture.”

NASS will mail out Census forms on December 28, 2007 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online. For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call toll-free (888) 4AG-STAT or (888) 424-7828.

The Census of Agriculture is the responsibility of every farmer and rancher, regardless of the size or type of operation. The definition of a farm for census purposes was first established in 1850. It has been changed nine times since. The current definition, first used for the 1974 census, is any place from which $1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.
ECSGA’s BMP Project

by Sandy Macfarlane

After several years of proposal submissions, the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association received funding from the Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center to develop an Environmental Code of Practice (ECP) and suite of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for shellfish aquaculture in the northeast region. Additional funding is expected to complete the task for the entire East Coast of the US.

The project team (Ed Rhodes, Gef Flimlin, Sandy Macfarlane, ECSGA and Colin Brannen, WWF) will hold nine regional meetings over two years, inviting growers and other stakeholders to the table to identify issues and propose solutions.

We anticipate two separate and distinct documents will emerge from this work. The first is an Environmental Code of Practice which is a set of guiding principles for operating a shellfish farm and the second is a set of Best Management Practices that are specific actions a grower may need to take to ensure environment protection where the farm is located.

Some states have their own set of BMPs developed recently or in the pipeline. We anticipate that the ECSGA effort will dovetail with and enhance these documents rather than be a separate group of BMPs that would only confuse everyone. While this process will be complicated, we already expected that there would be regional differences in the way people go about their business. For this reason, it will still be important for growers to attend the meetings to voice their concerns and opinions in order for us to make the final product as seamless as possible with the existing documents.

We are in the process of setting up the first round of meetings, starting with New York in December, Maryland in January at the Waterman’s Association Conference and Connecticut in February at the Milford Aquaculture Seminar. Discussions with folks from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and the Carolinas are taking place now but no date or dates have been set. We hope growers will participate in these workshops as that is the only way the final product can be industry-driven. We recognize that shellfish aquaculture is already a heavily regulated industry but we also recognize that the majority of the industry takes place on leased public lands and there are a lot of people watching the industry from the sidelines.

At the same time this project is progressing, the World Wildlife Fund is holding open dialogues concerning shellfish aquaculture “voluntary standards geared toward minimizing or eliminating the main environmental and social impacts caused by aquaculture.” (see related article in this newsletter). That means that there is a lot going on in the shellfish aquaculture world that could affect the way shellfish is grown in the future.

ECSGA feels that industry-driven Environmental Codes of Practice (ECPs) and BMPs can lead to greater industry environmental accountability, improve production efficiency, instill customer confidence in products and result in a higher a degree of self regulation that can provide economic benefits to the industry and a better product for the consumer. Markets increasingly want guarantees about the products they are selling which means the industry is changing. Nearly every day we hear of a new policy by seafood retailers to use only products that have environmental certification. Just recently Darden (Red Lobster) and WalMart announced this policy for farmed shrimp and for wild-caught fish.

All it takes is a glance at headlines recently to see that consumers can shut off the spigot of buying a certain product if there is bad press such as the recent recall of spinach. The ECSGA believes that a set of BMP’s adhered to by industry members will go a long way toward fending off potential negative perceptions. Please help us accomplish this goal.

The dates for the participatory meetings can be found under Upcoming Events on page 7.
Since the early 1990s, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has spearheaded the creation of certification programs for forestry (Forest Stewardship Council), fisheries (Marine Stewardship Council), agriculture (Protected Harvest), and climate (Climate Savers). All of the programs:

- Are built on a consensus about the key environmental impacts
- Identify and support the adoption of better management practices that significantly reduce or eliminate those impacts
- Determine globally acceptable performance levels
- Contribute to global shifts in performance within an industry

A similar approach is being used for the Aquaculture Dialogues which began in 1999. WWF collaborates with producers, buyers, nonprofit organizations and other stakeholders to develop credible, voluntary standards geared toward minimizing or eliminating the main environmental and social impacts caused by aquaculture. Dialogues are currently underway for salmon, shrimp, tilapia, pangasius, trout, and molluscs.

Through an open multi-stakeholder process consensus will be reached on the key impacts of production for each species and principles, criteria, and standards for more sustainable aquaculture production will be developed. These performance-based, measurable standards will lay the groundwork for a voluntary certification program.

Mollusc aquaculture has great potential to be certified as environmentally friendly. Such certification could take a number of forms, from a buyer or investment screen to a third-party eco-labeled product sold in supermarkets and restaurants. Producers participating in such a program could benefit from preferential treatment from lending agencies, retailers, or chefs, as well as increased or differentiated market access, and possibly even premium prices.

In August 2004, WWF initiated the Mollusc Aquaculture Dialogue where a range of industry, retail, and NGO representatives began to identify key areas of impact of mollusc culture. This past October, WWF and the Pacific Shellfish Growers Association reinitiated the dialogue at the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association’s annual conference in Welches, Oregon. At the meeting, stakeholders agreed on goals, objectives and a set of draft principles for sustainable shellfish production. The principles created at the meeting will be used to formulate criteria and indicators at upcoming dialogue meetings. Dialogue meetings are scheduled to take place January 19th in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, February 11th in Orlando, Florida and April 8th in Providence, Rhode Island. WWF’s strategy is to develop standards for North America before expanding internationally to create a global standard for mollusc aquaculture.

For more information about the mollusc dialogue, visit http://worldwildlife.org/aquadialogues or contact Aquaculture Program Officer Colin Brannen at colin.brannen@wwfus.org or 202-778-9534.
Healing Powers of Oysters Could Mend Human Bones

by Alex Duval Smith in Paris
Published: 30 October 2007

After at least 530 million years of clamming up, the oyster has revealed its secret curative properties to mankind. And they are not only aphrodisiac.

French biologists who have been studying the way oysters produce nacre, also known as mother-of-pearl, believe the process could be replicated to provide cures and preventative treatments for osteoporosis, arthritis and certain skin complaints.

"The key is biomineralisation," said Christian Milet at the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris. "Humans and oysters share the capacity for self repair. A human bone heals, as does a cracked oyster's shell. We now believe nacre can be used to stimulate bone growth."

Biomineralisation is as old as bivalve molluscs, which gives it quite a few million years on the human species. More than 4,000 years ago, the Maya people of Central America realised that nacre was not only beautiful but extremely hard and durable. They used it to make false teeth. In other cultures, including ancient Chinese and Egyptian, paste made from crushed nacre was recommended as a beauty cream.

The aphrodisiac quality of oysters has been recognised for many years but never scientifically proven. However, the mollusc's high content of zinc, which in humans is required for the production of testosterone, could be one explanation. Other research has shown that the shellfish are rich in certain amino acids that trigger increased levels of sex hormones.

For the biomineralisation process to work there does not need to be an "R" in the month. But scientists already know that some oysters are better at it than others. Those we eat, and which do not produce pearls, are the least scientifically interesting.

The oysters that produce the largest quantities of nacre are those, such as the Pinctada oyster, which also produce pearls. This is because natural pearls are formed when an oyster, while taking a gulp of water containing plankton, inadvertently swallows a piece of grit. To avoid the discomfort of sharing its shell with a nasty, jagged foreign object, the mollusc envelops it with smooth nacre: the pearl.

News of the French biologists' progress in understanding nacre-making emerged with the opening of an exhibition, Perles, une histoire naturelle, at the natural history museum in Paris.

Apart from showing some of the biggest pearls ever found – including a 171-gram seawater pearl – the exhibition provides a rare opportunity to view a
globe made by the jeweller Mikimoto on which the oceans are represented by 12,000 cultured pearls, the continents are made of gold and the equator is drawn with 377 rubies.

But Mr Milet's discovery is not going appear in the world's hospitals immediately. "We have already carried out in vivo bone graft tests in which we have obtained a perfect bond between the nacre and the bone. The medical uses of the biomineralisation will be seen some years into the future," he said. "We have already asserted that not only can nacre be grafted on to bone and be accepted by the human body, it also releases active molecules which induce bone regeneration."

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**Upcoming Events**

**ECSGA’s BMP Meetings** (first round)
- **New York** – December 13, 2007
- **North Carolina** – January 19, 2008
- **New Jersey** – January 24, 2008
- **Maryland** – January 26, 2008
- **Connecticut** – February 25, 2008

**ECSGA annual meeting**
January 18-19, 2008
Atlantic Beach, North Carolina
at the North Carolina Aquaculture Development Conference.
see [www.ncaquaculture.org](http://www.ncaquaculture.org)

**Walk on the Hill January 21-25, 2008**
(Congresional Reception January 23)

**World Aquaculture Society Aquaculture America Conference**
February 9 - 12, 2008
Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

**Milford Aquaculture Seminar**
February 25-27, 2008
location TBD

**Seafood conference in conjunction with Pacific Fisheries Technologists 59th annual meeting**
February 3-6, 2008
San Francisco, California.

**The National Shellfisheries Association 100th Annual Meeting**
April 6-10, 2008
Providence, Rhode Island.

Links to more information are available on the Upcoming Events page of the ECSGA website. [www.ECSAG.org](http://www.ECSAG.org)
The ECSGA annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the North Carolina Aquaculture Development Conference in Atlantic Beach, North Carolina on Saturday, January 19th. Get conference information and register on-line at [http://www.ncaquaculture.org](http://www.ncaquaculture.org).

The conference presentations include niche marketing, start-up strategies, sustainability, VHS update and more. The Shellfish and Marine Aquaculture sessions on Saturday will include:

- Comparing oyster growing methods;
- Crop Insurance for shellfish growers,
- Robert Cerda, Crop Insurance Systems, Inc.;
- World Wildlife Federation’s vision for sustainable shellfish certification standards, Colin Brannen, WWF;
- Proposed organic standards for shellfish aquaculture: The good the bad and the ugly, Robert Rheault ECSGA;
- and other topics of particular interest to shellfish growers.

In Memorium – John Volk

John Henry Volk lost a 10-month battle with brain cancer and is now peacefully at rest. Before becoming the Director of the Bureau of Aquaculture for the State of Connecticut, John worked for Long Island Oyster Farm as their principal biologist from 1978 to 1982. During his time in State service, he received several awards of achievement and commendation including many State awards for Excellent Managerial Performance, an Honorary State Future Farmers of America degree, and the Rhode Island House of Representatives Citation for Expertise in Aquaculture. John was long recognized as the consummate expert for issues pertaining to Long Island Sound and the shellfish industry. He also authored numerous shellfish related journal articles. In 1987, John was selected to be one of the representatives for the People to People Program and was a United States Aquaculture Ambassador,. John was highly respected by the shellfishing community as well as other environmental agencies and groups.

He was a man of great integrity. A group of his colleagues are petitioning to have the state Aquaculture Division research vessel renamed the John H. Volk, in his honor. “May his example be followed and his service never be forgotten.”

Friend and colleague, Michael Ludwig wrote, “What a loss! John was a great human, the perfect ‘voice’ for the CT (and US) shellfish industry and a super good diving partner. We worked on projects throughout Long Island Sound and he brought skills and knowledge from the industry side of the table that are so rarely present in situations where hard choices have to be made. He constantly proved that many of the best answers come from the person with experience. John was instrumental in ‘growing’ CT Shellfishing to the level it was before the problems in 1998 and I doubt there is a shellfish harvester in Connecticut who doesn't owe him a thank you. He is missed.
The Virginia Aquaculture Conference

About 150 people attended the Virginia Aquaculture Conference in Williamsburg on November 17 and 18. The gala reception featured many aquaculture products, including oysters. Among the nearly 30 presentations were talks on the status of aquaculture in the U.S., financial options for aquaculture businesses, crop insurance, aquaculture in the retail sector, private and public partnerships and state regulations. ECSGA member Luke Breza mentioned the value of joining the organization to those in attendance.

Luke Breza at the Virginia Aquaculture Conference

East Coast Shellfish Research Institute (ECSRI)

The ESCGA under Bob Rheault has spent considerable amount of time and effort developing the East Coast Shellfish Research Institute (ECSRI), modeled after the Pacific Shellfish Institute that has assisted in industry backed-experiments on shellfish issues for the Pacific growers. ECSRI was formally established by a vote of the ECSGA board members on May 31, 2007. Formal legal documents are being completed. The board elected John Kraeuter as the first President. (He was absent from the call.)

At a subsequent conference call, the Board (members from all states on the east coast) decided the first business was to review and revise the West Coast Shellfish Research and Education 2015 Goals and Priorities document to reflect East Coast needs. We hope to have a draft available for comment and emendation in time for the ECSGA annual meeting. We need input into this document to make it as complete as possible. While it is clear that not everything can be accomplished, it provides a guideline for ECSGA when it is asking for research funds during the visits to congress. Some funding for ECSRI has been incorporated into pending legislation (Thanks to the RI contingent). Tight budgets this year make receiving this money no better than 50/50, but at least shellfish are on the agenda.

When the draft document comes to a meeting near you, please comment. We are still in the early stages of forming this organization and need help from everyone to make ECSRI a success.

Please send comments, $, ideas or other items to me at the address below, or contact the board member in your state.

Troy Alphin: North Carolina
Bill Anderson: South Carolina
Shirley Baker: Florida
Chris Davis: Maine
Ethan Estey: Massachusetts
John Ewart: Delaware
Bill Goldsborough: Maryland
John Kraeuter: New Jersey
Rich Langan: New Hampshire
Dale Leavitt: Rhode Island
Dot Leonard: Maryland
Mike Peirson: Virginia
Mike Rice: Rhode Island
Greg Rivara: New York
Randy Walker: Georgia
Gary Wikfors: Connecticut
Over the past decade, aquaculture has solidified its position as a vital part of American agriculture. Increasing consumer demand for high quality aquaculture products indicates a bright future for the aquaculture industry. The United States Department of Agriculture and its Risk Management Agency (RMA) are very aware of the growing importance of the aquaculture industry, and RMA is working to provide programs and tools to help aquaculture producers manage risk.

RMA currently offers two crop insurance programs for aquaculture producers. The first program was specifically developed for cultured clam producers, and the second program covers producers of all agriculture commodities including aquaculture species. Crop insurance products are underwritten and regulated by RMA and sold through private companies and agents. A complete listing of crop insurance agents can be obtained at local Farm Service Agency offices or online at www.rma.usda.gov.

RMA’s Cultivated Clam Pilot Crop Insurance Program offers coverage for all cultured clams 10mm and larger in size that meet all the other requirements for insurability. The list of requirements for insurability can be found on the RMA website (www.rma.usda.gov) or by contacting a crop insurance agent. The policy covers losses that occur because of decrease in salinity, disease, freeze, hurricane, ice floe, oxygen depletion, storm surge, and tidal wave. The Sales Closing Date for this product is November 30, and the program is available to producers in the following states and counties:

- Florida: Brevard, Dixie, Indian River, and Levy
- Massachusetts: Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket, and Plymouth
- South Carolina: Beaufort and Charleston
- Virginia: Accomack and Northampton

The Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite (AGR-Lite) policy is a whole-farm revenue protection plan of insurance. Most aquaculture species raised in a control environment are eligible for coverage under this policy. To determine if your aquaculture species is covered under this policy, please contact a crop insurance agent. AGR-Lite coverage is based on a producer’s five-year historical farm average revenue as reported on the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Schedule F (or equivalent) form and annual farm report. AGR-Lite provides insurance against loss of revenue due to any unavoidable natural occurrences during the current or previous crop year or due to market fluctuations that cause a loss of revenue during the current crop year. AGR-Lite has a Sales Closing Date of March 15, 2008, and is available in the following Eastern U.S. states: Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.
Mail Membership form and dues to:
ECSGA c/o
Gef Flimlin
RCE of Ocean County
1623 Whitesville Road
Toms River, NJ 08755

Name

Company / affiliation

Address

City                                                                    State                                      Zip code

Phone                                                       Fax

I am joining as a ___ Grower ___Dealer ___Equipment Supplier
____ Associate ______________________________Other

I would like to receive the newsletter in ___written ___e-mail
___ Both written and electronic format
___ Please add me to the ECSGA e–mail discussion list
e-mail address __________________________________

Dues Payment: _______________

Member Benefits:
Listing on our website for growers, dealers and hatcheries
Listing on our website for growers, dealers and hatcheries
Advertising for suppliers in our newsletters
Representation to Federal agencies on matters of coast-wide impact
Immediate response to press inquiries and shellfish illness reports

Dues Schedule

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Dealers/Suppliers $250
Associations $10/member
Non-voting $35

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

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