

**Shellfish Management Plan (SMP) Kickoff Meeting Summary Notes**

Available at: [http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish\\_mgmt\\_plan.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish_mgmt_plan.html)

**Welcome – Judith Swift, URI:**

- Reviewed purpose of the SMP Kick-off meeting, which were to 1.) Provide an overview of the RI SMP initiative; and 2.) Begin to identify issues, concerns, opportunities, and expectations for the initiative
- Reminded participants that shellfish is a very important topic to Rhode Island (social, economic, and environmental)
- Reminded participants the SMP is a process and the intentions of the Kick-off meeting were to offer our thoughts on how to best go about the SMP process and then obtain feedback from audience
- Informed audience that everyone is invited to participate in this transparent, public process throughout the entire process
- Informed audience all meeting summary notes, PowerPoints, handouts, etc. will be made available on the SMP website:  
[http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish\\_mgmt\\_plan.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish_mgmt_plan.html)
- Recognized funders for their generous contributions – The Rhode Island Foundation, The Prospect Hill Foundation, The Sharpe Family Foundation/Henry and Peggy Sharpe, URI Coastal Institute, URI Coastal Resources Center, and The Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program.
- Introduced SMP coordinating team: DEM, CRMC, URI, CRC

**Introductory Remarks:****Dean Bruce Corliss**

- Highlighted the commitment of URI to the SMP
- Announced that because of the SMP, the Rhode Island Sea Grant College Program would be investing \$1.2 million into shellfish research

**RI Senator Sue Sosnowski**

- Looks forward to the SMP process
- Anticipates the SMP will enhance opportunities in the state, particularly aquaculture, and has potential to progress policies
- The SMP aligns with Sen. Sosnowski's ideology of supporting industry and small business, as well as stakeholder initiatives

**RI Representative Eileen Naughton**

- Very pleased to be involved in the SMP
- She has worked with many of the people at the meeting in the past to improve the shellfish resource in RI, which she is passionate about wants to enhance for prosperity, as well as cultural and social aspects (family values, delicious and nutritional food source)

**Dr. Peter Alfonso, URI Vice President for Research and Economic Development –**

- URI very pleased to work hand in hand with external constituents to develop the SMP, and the Office for Research and Economic Development will do everything they can to support the SMP initiative
- Expressed this is an important stakeholder process and is confident that it will be used as a model for other states, as the Ocean SAMP has been
- Spoke of how URI is a Land Grant institution, and, as such, it is URI's obligation to work with everyone in state to make our state more prosperous

### **SMP Initiative Overview – Mark Gibson, DEM, and Dave Beutel, CRMC:**

#### **Mark Gibson, DEM**

- Marine Fisheries has been envisioning the SMP for decades
- Having all shellfish activities under one umbrella is an important process that needs to be done
- He is pleased to help launch and be apart of this initiative

#### **Dave Beutel, CRMC**

- Presented PowerPoint (available on SMP website: [http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish\\_mgmt\\_plan.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish_mgmt_plan.html))
- Introduced what the SMP hopes to do, who is involved, why it is important
- Expressed that the SMP coordinating team is excited to see so many participants at the Kick-off meeting and how the turnout indicates shellfish is a highly valued issue among Rhode Islanders
- Emphasized to audience "This is your plan" – The process works best and can only be successful with stakeholder involvement. Recognized that there will be some apprehension throughout the process, which is understandable, but reminded audience this can be relieved by through their participation – including through meetings, document reviews, conveying thoughts and comments via email or phone.
- Emphasized that communication is key, a challenge the SMP will address through meetings, the Listserv, and the SMP website.
- Again reminded audience that this is an open, transparent, public process and the SMP coordinating team always welcomes input, comments, concerns, etc.
- Introduced three scoping sessions that will occur in January:
  - Aquaculture: Jan 16<sup>th</sup> 1-3 pm
  - Commercial and Recreational Harvest: Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> 4-6 pm
  - Restoration and Enhancement: Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 3-5 pm
  - Meetings to be held in Hazards Rooms in Coastal Institute Building on URI Narragansett Bay Campus
- Introduced on-going and complementary projects associated with the SMP (for further details, visit [http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish\\_mgmt\\_plan.html](http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/seafood/shellfish_mgmt_plan.html))
- Contact for the SMP are:
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- Questions from audience:

- *Is this a Federal mandate to create this plan?* No, being created because it is needed – DEM, CRMC, and all public need it.
- *Where is authority coming from?* DEM is tasked with creating management plans and have generously agreed to collaborate and coordinate on this project
- *Does shellfish mean “Quahog” because so closely associated w/ RI?* No, it means shellfish of all species. Some are more significant in value than others, but all needs to be part of the SMP
- *Plan for all RI or parts?* Plan is for all RI state marine waters, yes.

**Open Discussion – Facilitated by Jen McCann, URI:**

*The issues raised during the open discussion were transcribed on flip charts by Azure Cygler and Monique LaFrance. No attempts were made here to prioritize them or list in any order of perceived importance. If you find your ideas are inadequately expressed, incomplete, or incorrectly transcribed, please contact Azure at [azure@crc.uri.edu](mailto:azure@crc.uri.edu) / 401-874-6197*

- Need simple access to existing research –on-going and concluded; need place to find it, possibly a database?
- Possibility of an aquaculture ‘Economic Development Zone’.
- Adequate funding for implementation of the programs discussed in SMP process
- Understanding differing needs of inshore and offshore aquaculture- in and out of Narragansett Bay, i.e. ponds vs. bays
- Perpetual management for ecological health and sustainability – not just shellfish - in the Bay
- Need for harmful algal bloom component to management (ex. In Narragansett Bay there are 20+ other species that are harmful)
- SMP process be consistent with National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) play by these rules for export reasons
- RI state closures are longer than other states – why?
- Predator management – affecting shellfish and the environment
- Cormorant and sanitation issue with birds - affecting shellfish and environment
- Upwellers that are in closed waters, lengthen the time, go from 6 to 12 months
- Procedure to prioritize risks
- Maintain brood stock population that can provide excess for a fishery. What is that level that can: a) maintain brood stock, and b) create excess for the fishery
- Will be water quality changes happening that the SMP process should take into consideration
- Identify sites for spawner sanctuaries, etc. based on suitable substrate characteristics; data is already available
- Need for Department of Health to have analytical skills to analyze data. à build capacity of state agencies
- Local community education needed. Ex. Harbor Commission etc.

- Create use maps; overlays of uses and potential conflicts, ex. wild harvest and aquaculture, etc. – Note: There is an existing use map, see Dave Beutel
- Clear guidelines on seaweed aquaculture
- Include Town managers, Harbor Masters, etc. in SMP. Tourism brings conflicts. Let towns about this process and that the state wants to promote shellfish.
- Accessibility- most Right of Ways are gone – public access issues make recreational harvest challenging.
- Tools to look into: 1) EcoPath, EcoSim, EcoSpace; spatial tools for in the Bay.
- Coordination between DEM and CRMC- different missions
- Better define restoration as ecological services
- Differentiate between restoration and research
- Restoration baselines
- Economic zone protection
- Flow patterns in the Bay - ongoing research
- Funding
- Enforcement- rules from who, also funding
- Aquaculture as agriculture – clarity needed
- Seafood health and safety – DOH, HACCP, others
- Right to Farm - aquaculture/agriculture
- Nursery areas - better utilized/ progress
- Consistency of shellfish pathology, transplanting report requirements
- Anticipate changes to the environment - climate change, sea level rise, ocean acidification
- Collect info on shellfish stocks; assess stocks in independent water bodies
- Maintain genetic diversity
- Invasive species
- Incorporate hydrodynamic info - modeling, physical oceanography
- Inc. level of data - need protocol for sharing data/ partnering (state agencies)
- Recreational shellfishing: a) permanent closures competition w/ other resources (marinas, polluted), reclaiming permanent closures i.e. mooring fields, b) planning for re-opening, c) state funding for local communities to restore/ re-open these areas
- Use conflicts - all activities in the Bay
- Cost/Benefit analysis of closed waters and use conflicts - study
- Economic and cultural value of recreational shellfishing
- Economic analysis of species – which are most valuable?
- Improve on promoting shellfish for ecotourism - seeded pond
- Opportunity of shellfish resource for economic growth

#### **State Agency Remarks – Janet Coit, DEM, and Grover Fugate, CRMC:**

##### **Janet Coit, DEM**

- Expressed excitement about the SMP and how beneficial it will be for RI; this project will benefit the economy, environment, and shellfish industry

- Emphasized that we do not have to do this, we want to; this is not a crisis moment – no one telling us what we need to do w/ our (RI) shellfish, rather, this is our opportunity to better the shellfish resource
- Committed to working directly and openly on the SMP
- Confident will have a shared vision, and be smarter about how we manage and perceive shellfish
- Anticipates the outcomes of SMP will include:
  - Improved work and coordination efforts between and among state agencies and stakeholders, and the creation of more partnerships to achieve shared goals
  - Sharing of data between and among agencies and stakeholder groups
  - Improved technology related to the shellfish resource (harvesting, restoration, data collection, improved science, etc.)
  - Improved management strategy, including through increased statutory clarity, understanding, and support, lack of redundancy, and more clearly defined roles of DEM and CRMC
  - Promote shellfish in RI
- Expressed gratitude to funders for providing funding that we otherwise would not have seen (i.e. from public funds) for this initiative

#### Grover Fugate, CRMC

- CRMC excited about SMP effort and will support the initiative any way possible
- DEM and CRMC committed to cooperate and work together on this project
- Shellfish in RI has been an important part of RI history, culture, and its fabric. As such, it is important that we maintain and development industry to its fullest. To do this, we need to manage shellfish properly and together.
- Reminded audience that there is a lot of competition for shellfish out there that RI can take advantage of this – great economic opportunity for the state
- RI has a good history of working together, and together, there is much we can accomplish.

#### Next steps – Jen McCann, URI:

- Thanked audience
- Restated dates of next meetings
- Emphasized that anyone should feel free to call/contact about the SMP