

## East Coast Regional Molluscan Aquaculture Health Management Workshop: Meeting Summary

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The goal of this workshop, held September 9-10 at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, was to *identify strategies for a regional, science-based approach to shellfish management that facilitate shellfish aquaculture commerce while minimizing health risks to cultured and wild populations*—in other words, to seek improvements to the present regulatory paradigm that would reduce and minimize impediments to commerce while maintaining biosecurity of the industry.

Over the course of two days, representatives from industry and the East Coast regulatory and pathology/academic communities, joined by collaborators from the USDA APHIS Veterinary Services and USDA Agricultural Research Service, met to identify obstacles to effective regional molluscan aquaculture health management and to characterize a number of potential solutions from commercial, regulatory, and pathology/scientific community perspectives.

A number of obstacles to effective health management were identified, including uncertainty regarding pathogen distributions and levels of pathogen presence that should trigger control (for example, rejection of a proposed transfer); limited structures to coordinate regulations and diagnostic services; and need for methods to reduce the cost of health evaluations and the long wait time for results. Communication structures, decision support services, shared databases, and mechanisms to direct research were some of the elements considered key to effective regional solutions. Several potential solutions were raised:

- 1) Develop a *risk matrix* that characterizes disease risk based on shellfish and pathogen species, geography, seed size, and other factors, and which can guide decision-making by regulators;
- 2) Target *research* to address knowledge gaps in this matrix;
- 3) Pursue *hatchery certification* as a means of increasing the freedom of commerce in larvae and seed not exposed to natural waters, which would incentivize transfers of younger and more biosecure products;
- 4) Create a *molluscan pathology working group* to facilitate communication, standardize diagnostic approaches, and coordinate responses to outbreaks;
- 5) Consider an *aquaculture health advisory committee* as a vehicle for improved communication among industry, regulation and the pathology/scientific community;
- 6) Promote *standardization of policies* with regard to aquaculture transfers through engagement with state regulatory agencies and, where necessary, legislatures in the East Coast states; and
- 7) Promote *education* of industry and the public in the importance and means of molluscan health management.

The September workshop at VIMS was a prelude to a larger workshop to be held January 14-15, 2015, in Portland, ME, in association with the Northeast Aquaculture Conference and Exposition and with support from the NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Research Program. The January workshop will build on the VIMS workshop to define concrete steps toward solutions. A special panel session is also planned for the December 10-13, 2014 ICSR meeting in Charleston, SC. We welcome and encourage participation from East Coast industry, regulators, and pathologists. Feel free to submit comments as we continue this process to either Dave Bushek ([bushek@hssl.rutgers.edu](mailto:bushek@hssl.rutgers.edu)) or Ryan Carnegie ([carnegie@vims.edu](mailto:carnegie@vims.edu)).

***Workshop Attendees***

Stan Allen, Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
Sebastian Belle, Maine Aquaculture Association  
David Blahna, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services  
David Bushek, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Rutgers University  
Lisa Calvo, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Rutgers University, and NJ Sea Grant Consortium  
Ryan Carnegie, Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
Michael Congrove, Oyster Seed Holdings, LLC  
Lynn Creekmore, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services  
Susan Ford, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Rutgers University  
Lori Gustafson, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services  
Craig Hardy, North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries  
Troy Hartley, Virginia Sea Grant  
Karen Hudson, Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Virginia Sea Grant  
Rebecca Jones, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services  
Michael Oesterling, Shellfish Growers of Virginia  
Dina Proestou, USDA Agricultural Research Service  
Tim Rapine, Cherrystone AquaFarms  
Kimberly Reece, Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
Robert Rheault, East Coast Shellfish Growers Association  
Jeff Silverstein, USDA Agricultural Research Service  
Roxanna Smolowitz, Roger Williams University  
Rebecca Thur, Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
Janet Warg, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services  
Jim Wesson, Virginia Marine Resources Commission

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