Oyster tasting challenge, packed program, all part of NSA 100th Anniversary Meeting in RI, April 6-10

PROVIDENCE, RI – "100 years, a full century of shellfish. What an exciting milestone for the National Shellfisheries Association," said NSA President David Bushek in a recent letter to members.

An exciting milestone indeed. NSA members from across the country will be gathering at the Westin Providence Hotel here April 6-10 for the 100th Anniversary Meeting of the NSA, followed immediately by the 37th Annual Benthic Ecology Meeting.

"It's an incredible honor for me to preside over the association's centennial meeting," Bushek said. "For me, this meeting symbolizes the beginning of another century of shellfish and I am excited to be a part of it."

Shellfish growers, harvesters, researchers, managers, and others will participate in an intense 3-1/2-day program of technical presentations and workshops focused on a broad range of shellfish issues.

It won't be entirely all work and no play, however.

Sandy Shumway, Dustin Kach, and Dane Frank, hard at work preparing the program for the 100th anniversary meeting.

On the evening of April 7, the NSA is hosting an "invitational oyster challenge" event.

"Oyster farmers are fiercely competitive and every grower is convinced that his or her oyster tastes the best," said Robert "Skid" Rheault of Rhode Island-based Moonstone Oysters and the challenge event organizer.

To settle the matter of who's best, the NSA has organized a special tasting of 20 varieties of the Eastern (or American) oyster from across the country. Oysters will be sampled and rated by a panel of celebrity judges, including Rowan Jacobson, author of The Geography of Oysters.

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In addition to ranking by the judges, oysters in the competition will be analyzed chemically to examine salt and mineral content to gain a better understanding of the unique flavor profiles of each entry.

A limited number of tickets to the event are available at $50 each, Rheault said.

In looking back over the history of today's NSA and the remarkable journey that has led to this milestone anniversary, Bushek said the association grew out of a merger several years ago between the Oyster Growers and Dealers Association and the National Association of Shellfish Commissioners.

Today, Bushek said, NSA membership spans some 40 countries worldwide.

"As always, our job as researchers, resource managers, and members of industry, is to work together to identify a path forward," Bushek said, "learning from our failures and successes alike, while developing and adopting new strategies to advance the field."

For more information on NSA anniversary meeting registration and accommodations, visit <http://shellfish.org/>. For more information on the oyster tasting event, e-mail <bob@moonstoneoysters.com>. ffw/