

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ATLANTIC COAST SECTION OF THE  
NEW JERSEY SHELLFISHERIES COUNCIL

Meeting was held at the Atlantic County Library - Galloway Twp Branch (306 E Jimmie Leeds Road, Galloway Twp NJ 08205)  
Attend in-person or online via Microsoft TEAMS

Monday, April 10, 2023

Present were: Chairman:	Walter L. Johnson III	(Ocean County)
Vice Chairman:	George Mathis Jr.	(Burlington County)
Councilman:	Paul T. Felder	(Cape May County)
Councilman:	Vacant	(Monmouth County)
Councilman:	Vacant	(Atlantic County)

DEP Representatives:

Jeff Normant, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Jenny Tomko, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Megan Kelly, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Scott Stueber, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Richard DiVaccaro, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Robert Schuster, Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring

Mr. Normant read the State's compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act and notice was filed with the Secretary of State Office and sent to the Atlantic City Press and NJ Advanced Media outlets. He announced that the meeting would be recorded.

1. Total Revenue for March 2022 \$ 498.52  
Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund \$ 278.00
2. Presentation of March 13, 2023 minutes for approval.

The March 13, 2023 minutes of the meeting were approved on a motion by Mr. Felder and seconded by Mr. Mathis.

3. Old Business:

Lease Policy Committee Update

Mr. Normant explained that the draft Lease Policy Committee report was largely complete, and the Bureau was finalizing edits. A draft copy of the report would be provided to the Council and all Committee members that attended the meetings for review. Council and Committee members were asked to share any significant or substantive comments only. Mr. Johnson requested the report be sent to the Committee and Council members at least two weeks prior to the May Council meeting.

2023 Committee Membership - Administrative Guidelines

After receiving Council member comments, the Bureau sent the Council a revised document for review prior to the April Council meeting. Mr. Johnson noted that after discussion with the Bureau, the changes addressed his concerns. Mr. Johnson did not want to impede future Council members and wanted to describe a suitable process

for a smaller Council like the Shellfisheries Council to increase efficiency. There was agreement between Council members that their questions and concerns were addressed in the amended version of the document. The Atlantic Coast Section of the New Jersey Shellfisheries Council's Administrative Guidelines document was approved on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder.

#### Structural Aquaculture Committee

Mr. Normant provided a charge statement for the proposed Structural Aquaculture Committee. As per the newly adopted guidelines, the Bureau was tasked with creating an application for potential Committee members to complete for Council review. Mr. Normant asked if anyone was interested in becoming a member to reach out to the Bureau. In addition, the Bureau was tasked to send an email to known structural aquaculture industry members utilizing the current list of Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture permit holders from the Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring.

The formation of the Structural Aquaculture Committee was approved on a motion by Mr. Felder and seconded by Mr. Mathis.

Mr. Mathis added that the Committee should also be charged with formulating best management practices for the structural aquaculture industry. The Committee charge statement was approved on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder.

Structural Aquaculture Committee charge statement: "The Atlantic Coast Section of the New Jersey Shellfisheries Council's Structural Aquaculture Committee will consist of licensed industry representatives from the structural shellfish aquaculture sector. This committee will be available, as needed, to consider key issues related to conducting structural shellfish aquaculture as it relates to policy, regulation, best management practices (BMPs), and lease management. Committee meetings will be initiated by the Council and Committee activities will work to formulate recommendations for Council and Department consideration."

#### Letter to Assemblyman Conaway: Legislative Bill A519

As approved by the Council at the March 13, 2023 meeting, the Council sent a letter to Assemblyman Conaway regarding Bill A5197/Conaway (D7) regarding oyster reef restoration siting. The letter included clarification of the Council's role in consultation with the Department to develop oyster restoration sites, concerns with the proposed Bill, and to request a meeting to discuss further.

#### Hard Clam Management Plan

Mr. Mathis asked to move forward with the Hard Clam Management Plan Committee since the Administrative Guidelines were approved. Mr. Normant explained that he would discuss with Ms. Dacanay the status of membership and report back to the Council. The Council agreed to review membership of the Committee using the same mechanism outlined in the Administrative Guidelines document.

4. New Business:

Conservation Opportunities Advancing Sustainable Technologies for Aquaculture Leases (COASTAL) Project

Ms. Kristin Adams with the Ocean County Soil Conservation District and partner employee with NJ/USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) presented on the funded COASTAL Project. Eligible participants included shellfish aquaculture producers on the Atlantic Coast with priority in the Barnegat and Great Bays. Growers would be contracted to raise a contracted amount of oyster spat on shell on their lease for one growing season before being planted on a restoration site. Applications were due by July 15, 2023. There were four years of funding available from 2024 to 2027, and applicants needed to apply each year. In addition, the farmers would be responsible for obtaining all necessary permits for aquaculture activities, acquiring spat on shell from a remote setting contractor and required to utilize disease resistant diploid eyed larvae. Ms. Adams added that there were two upcoming in-person outreach events: Wednesday April 26, 2023 at 6:00pm in Waretown and Wednesday May 3, 2023 at 6:00 pm in Mays Landing. Mr. Johnson inquired where the oysters would be planted. Ms. Adams stated that the oysters would be planted on Stockton University's Tuckerton Reef or Mill Creek Reef by the Route 72 bridge. Priority would be given to growers in the Barnegat Bay and Great Bay region, but if there was interest in growers further South, there was a potential to investigate planting in the Great Egg Harbor River with consultation of the Bureau. Mr. Mathis asked about the current assessments of Stockton's reefs for survival rates. Mr. Normant added there were reports of heavy predation after assessment of the SOAR project. Ms. Adams confirmed that funding included sampling to determine success rates.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder.

5. Date time and place of next meeting:

DATE: May 8, 2023  
TIME: 6:00 PM  
LOCATION: Hybrid In-Person and Virtual  
Atlantic County Library – Galloway Twp Branch