

Aquaculture Committee

Friday, October 4, 2013
Oregon Department of Agriculture
635 Capitol St. NE, Salem

Participants: Frank Barcellos, ODA-Food Safety; Clint Bentz and Kathy Bridges, Oregon Aquaculture Association; Mary Camarata, DEQ; Katy Coba, ODA-Director; Jerry Gardner, ODA-Business Development; Tim Horgan, Pacific Seafood; Jim Johnson, ODA-Land Use; Dr. Dave Landkamer, OSU Extension; Dr. John Moehl, Consultant; Amanda Osborne, Ecotrust; Scott Patterson, Ore Dept of Fish & Wildlife; Mike Schaer, Fish Farmer; Dr. Gil Sylvia, OSU Coastal Oregon Marine Experiment Station.

1:05 pm Introductions and welcome from Katy Coba, Director

Katy expressed the ODA's desire to support the ad hoc aquaculture committee's work to investigate potential opportunities to enhance aquaculture in Oregon. She indicated that the ODA was happy to request a grant from the mid-Valley Regional Solutions Team (RST) in support of aquaculture. She asked the members of the group to support this grant request and asked them to prepare a letter of support acknowledging the need for this work. Katy thanked everyone for agreeing to participate in this effort.

1:15pm Jerry Gardner briefly discussed the group's purpose and expectations.

- a) Aquaculture in Oregon lags behind other NW states. It therefore represents an economic development opportunity.
- b) However, there is a need to define the opportunity and investigate the potential for streamlining the regulatory processes to attract investment into this sub-sector of the agricultural economy.
- c) The committee is expected to approve an outline for a "white paper" about the potential to expand aquaculture in Oregon. The group will then review a draft document and guarantee it's accuracy and completeness.
- d) Gardner distributed as list of committee members, a brochure authored by Dr. John Moehl titled "Farming Oregon's Waters: Is Aquaculture A Good Choice?", a power point presentation titled, "Aquaculture ad hoc Advisory Group", the grant proposal submitted to the RST, and a study prepared by Dr. Ed Schmisser titled, "Marketing Opportunities and Strategies for Oregon's Freshwater Aquaculture" (2008).
- e) Dr. Landkamer distributed the Summer 2013 newsletter, Confluence, from the Oregon Sea Grant Program. The focus of this newsletter is "Aquaculture in Oregon: Thriving in the Throes of Change."

1:30pm The State of Aquaculture in Oregon: Status report from participants

- a) Dr. Moehl briefly described his history of helping countries develop aquaculture operations in Africa and elsewhere. He recently returned to Oregon after retiring from the United Nations and learned that Oregon does not have a strategic plan for aquaculture. John indicated that it is a good time to develop a state plan to determine whether or not aquaculture make sense in Oregon and, if so, to what extent?
- b) Dr. Silvia outlined his past efforts to try to get the State of Oregon to consider supporting aquaculture. Neither the Governor's office nor the ODA has been of much help in the past. However, changes in the economy and in the way consumers perceive seafood may signal that it is a good time to re-think efforts to support this industry. Gil welcomed the State's efforts to support aquaculture. For its part, OSU continues to work on all facets of aquaculture to include hydroponics, genetically appropriate oysters, and helping to establish a diverse set of seafood species.
- c) Clint Bentz's family has raised trout for 45 years. Clint reevaluates his aquaculture business each year and wonders why he continues the family tradition some years. Regulatory issues, water issues, transportation issues, and issues associated with the cost of operating an aquaculture business are all challenges he deals with each year. Clint supports the concept of streamlining the permitting process and developing a "one-stop-shop." Oregon's aquaculture industry has to grow to gain the type of economies that will support producers and make the industry viable.
- d) Pacific Seafood is a major player in the aquaculture industry. Tim Horgan indicated that the company has aquaculture operations in five states and three countries. The firm farms oysters, clams, king salmon, steelhead, tilapia, trout and more. The company would consider significant additional new investment in Oregon if the State became more business friendly toward aquaculture.
- e) Jim Johnson pointed out that Oregon's estuary plans have not been updated for 30 years. From a land use planning perspective, it is essential to have current and realistic plans for the appropriate placement of aquaculture operations. This is true for both coastal and in-land projects. Requests continue to come in for these lands and the State is ill-prepared to site aquaculture operations using relevant data. There is a lack of good data, in general, with respect to aquaculture. Jim indicated that research needs to be carried out on such subjects as eel grass, mussels, and clam production. Establishing aquaculture operations on EFU land requires a conditional use permit but few such permits are requested. Jim emphasized the need for certainty with respect to the process. Jim pointed out that producers in Washington have organized while Oregon producers remain a scattered group of individuals.
- f) Mike Schaer indicated that his experience with ODF&W regarding his striped bass permit request was positive. He also indicated that OSU Extension has been helpful in assisting him with his business. Mike sees strong markets for his product among Asian consumers. Mike feels that less government involvement is better than more.

- g) Dr. Landkamer recently attended the Pacific Coast Shellfish Association conference. The Governor's significant other, Cynthia Hayes, was the keynote speaker indicating that aquaculture is receiving attention from the top levels of State government. Dave described the critical "four E's" important to aquaculture. 1) Eat – consumers love to eat seafood. However, 91% of what we consumer is imported. 2) Economics – aquaculture offers economic opportunity. The potential is on par with other sectors including salmon, whiting, and shrimp. 3) Environment – stewardship of the seafood industry is critical to its long-term viability. Indeed, oyster production actually contributes to the vitality of Oregon's coastal environment. 4) Education – there is a need to educate consumers about the benefits of aquaculture. Dave also pointed to the significant resources within ODF&W to research and produce fish. Dave indicated that NOAA would like to join the group.
- h) Amanda Osborne is interested in aquaculture from a small farms perspective and wants to increase the consumption of locally produced agricultural products.
- i) Scott Patterson reminded the group that ODF&W has to comply with the same set of regulations as private sector producers. And, the agency is tasked with balancing wild and natural fish populations with other competing demands. The ODF&W has a set of mandates it must follow and it does not have the discretion to overlook certain legal requirements. Scott emphasized his agency's desire to assist the group in any way it can.
- j) Frank Barcellos indicated that the ODA is working to implement the new federal Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). All indications are that tighter water regulations will evolve and that this could directly impact aquaculture in Oregon. Frank suggested that now is a good time to get out in front of these new regulations and address what they might mean for the industry.
- k) Kathy Bridges wants to know what type of fish can be raised in Oregon and where the fish come from. It seems that some types of fish are regulated, while others, like ornamental fish, are not. Kathy sees a need for the ODF&W to communicate more frequently with fish producers who are involved in aquaculture.
- l) The DEQ regulated some of the businesses at the table. Mary Camarata wants to make sure this fact is not lost on the participants. Good environmental regulation is critical to this industry and the DEQ is willing to work with producers.

2:25pm Open discussion – general comments from the members.

- a) All the participants recognized and agreed that, under the appropriate conditions, and with reasonable planning, aquaculture represents an economic opportunity for the State of Oregon.
- b) However, there was a suggestion that Oregon is not on a level playing field with other states. For example, Washington and California are more business friendly when it comes to aquaculture. Tim Horgan indicated that his company owns 17,000 acres of

land in Oregon suitable for aquaculture but they only operate on 3,800 acres. If Oregon's fish producers were able to operate on the same level as producers in neighboring states, Oregon could expect additional investment in this industry.

- c) The group briefly discussed ways to approach the next meeting. There is a need to plan an outline that will guide the development of the "white paper". One suggestion is to divide members into groups. Individuals may fit into one or more categories. Opportunities, issues and challenges need to be addressed at each level.

Area	Company Size		
	Small	Medium	Large
Regulations			
Production			
Marketing			
Environment			
Education			
Funding			

Another suggestion is to use Dr. Landkamer "4-E's" to organize the paper.

Eat, Economics, Environment and Education.

- d) Investment in aquaculture will increase. But it's not coming to Oregon. What can be done?
- e) There was a suggestion to invite Oregon Business, Oregon Water Resources, and Oregon Dept. of State Lands to the table.
- f) Clint Bentz moved to draft a letter to be sent to the mid-Valley Regional Solutions Advisory Committee in support of the ODA's grant request. Kathy Bridges seconded and the group unanimously approved.
- g) Dr. Gil Silvia and Dr. Landkamer volunteered to obtain a similar letter from the OSU Sea Grant Program in support of the grant application.

2:55pm Next meeting

The next will be in mid-November.

3:00pm Adjourn