

Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council
Industry Advisory Committee Meeting
February 21, 2011 6:00 PM
URI/GSO Narragansett Bay Campus,
Coastal Institute, Hazard Room
South Ferry Road, Narragansett, RI 02882

MFC members Present: Rick Bellavance, Richard Hittinger

IAC Members Present: Gerard Tremblay, Eric Reid, Michael McGiveney

IAC Members Absent: Robert Mattiucci, Stephen Arnold, Chris Brown, Carl Grandquist,

Lanny Dellinger, Robert Smith, Ted Platz.

DEM Marine Fisheries & CRMC: Najih Lazar, Dennis Erkan, David Beutel

Other participants: Michael Marchetti, Gregory Mataronas, Jeff Grant.

Chairman Bellavance opened the meeting with a roll call. Four IAC members were present with Council member Richard Hittinger, representing the recreational sector. Although, a quorum was not present, the Chair reminded the audience that this meeting was called for by the Marine Fisheries Council on an ad-hoc basis for the sole purpose of reviewing aquaculture applications # 2011-01-014 and 2011-02-049, with added representation from the recreational sector by Richard Hittinger and/or Steve Medeiros. The Chair asked the Committee to proceed with the agenda and formulate a recommendation on a consensus basis.

Beutel presented a description of the first application # 2011-01-014 for a 6 acres open-ocean mussel aquaculture, off Sheep Point. The applicants (Mataronas and Marchetti) were present and added remarks on results from the commercial viability work, which demonstrated successful results of excellent growth rates, excellent meat yield, and most importantly the absence of pea crabs. Mataronas added that the site was out of busy traffic areas, commercial and recreational fishing activities, and relatively in deep waters away for fishing trap sites.

Lazar pointed out that the Division of Fish and Wildlife is concerned about the close proximity of this site to the Sheep Point Artificial Reef (0.2 miles), and the potential impact on the ongoing monitoring efforts on the reef. The Division is in the process of reviewing the potential impact and will provide its recommendation on March 7th RIMFC meeting.

Lazar noted that, while there are no guidelines on aquaculture gear deployment within state waters that would prohibit mussel longline, it appears that the gear configuration could pose a risk to whales that have historically been sighted in the area. For this purpose, Lazar requested an evaluation by the Office of Protected Resources of the National Marine Fisheries Service. Beutel indicated that a review was performed and a letter indicating no-impact has been issued.

Without objections, the group recommended that the Marine Fisheries Council approve aquaculture application# 2011-01-014 for a 6 acres site for ocean mussel aquaculture.

Erkan asked about the process for future applications competing with this existing permit for mussel aquaculture. Beutel responded that any future application will be processed according to the existing CRMC and DEM regulations.

Additional discussion on aquaculture review process took place. Lazar stated that the Shellfish Advisory Panel has been a good process for shellfish aquaculture proposals in Narragansett Bay, but interest diminished for addressing others proposals, such as in the coastal pond and outside of Narragansett Bay. The Group felt that IAC may be suited for reviewing future aquaculture proposals but lacks representation of the recreational fishing sector, and public input. The Group recommended that the Marine Fisheries Council considers forming a separate advisory panel with a focused mission on aquaculture matters and review of the aquaculture applications.

Chair Bellavance called for discussion on the second application # 2011-02-049. The applicant was not present. Beutel added that the full application was received on 2/18/2010 and may require more time for public input. The Chair decided to table review of the application for the next available advisory meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at approx. 7:15 PM

The applicant for file #2011-02-049 (Mr. Goerner) walked in after the meeting had been adjourned.

By: Najih Lazar