

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

Monday June 16, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Nacote Creek Research Station (360 N New York Rd, Port Republic, NJ 08205)  
and virtually via Microsoft Teams

ROLL CALL:      Chairman:                      Walter L. Johnson III      (Ocean County)  
                         Vice-Chairman:              George Mathis Jr.          (Burlington County)  
                         Councilman:                   Paul T. Felder              (Cape May County)  
                         Councilman:                   Edward W. Gaine          (Atlantic County)  
                         Councilman:                   Vacant                        (Monmouth County)

DEP Representatives:      Joseph Cimino, Marine Resources Administration\*  
\*Attended virtually      Russell Babb, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
   Jeffrey Normant, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
   Megan Swain, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
   Richard DiVaccaro, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
   Scott Steuber, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
   Victor Poretti, Division of Water Monitoring, Standards and Pesticide Control\*

*In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 13:1B-30 et. seq), a notice of this meeting was posted with the Secretary of State’s Office, State House, Trenton, NJ and sent to the Atlantic City Press and NJ Advanced Media news outlets. This meeting was recorded.*

1. Total Revenue for May 2025                                      \$ 1,684.17  
    Shellfisheries Law Enforcement Fund                        \$ 545.00

2. Presentation of the May 19, 2025 meeting minutes for approval.

The May 19, 2025 minutes were approved on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Gaine.

3. Applications for Decision

APPLICANT	LOT	SEC	ACRES	LOCATION	MAP	SPECIES	PROPOSED ACTIVITY
Eggert Olafsson*	659	B	2.00	Little Egg Harbor Bay – Jeremy Point	12	Oyster	Floating Cages/Bags – “Flip Farm System”
Asa Ragnarsdottir*	660	B	2.00	Little Egg Harbor Bay – Jeremy Point	12	Oyster	Floating Cages/Bags – “Flip Farm System”

\*Attended the May 19, 2025 Meeting

At the May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the applicants were asked to attend this meeting and provide more information on how they planned to implement bird deterrents on their proposed flip farm system. Mr. Gaine had some concerns regarding the more recent issue bird interactions on floating shellfish aquaculture gear. Mr. Olafsson responded to the Council that he attended the Rutgers Growers Forum on May 20<sup>th</sup> to gather more information and spoke to other growers to gain more insight on what other growers were doing to successfully deter birds. Mr. Olafsson clarified that he was in contact with a grower who has had success using a monofilament string barrier over the floating gear. Mr. Gaine was satisfied with the response from the applicant and emphasized that the goal was to keep applicants apprised of these issues. The applications for decision were approved on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder. Ms. Swain stated the applicants would receive a letter informing them of the decision and that they would have 30 days to come to the office to sign the lease agreement.

4. Applications for Transfer

LESSEE	APPLICANT	LOT	SEC	ACRES	LOCATION	MAP	SPECIES	PROPOSED ACTIVITY
Robert Yorke	Santo Rando	2310	B	2.42	Dry Bay	24.2	Hard Clam	Wild Clam Harvest & Planting Chowders
Robert Yorke	Santo Rando	2312	B	2.59	Dry Bay	24.2	Hard Clam	Wild Clam Harvest & Planting Chowders

The applications for transfer were approved on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder. Ms. Swain stated that the applicant would receive a letter informing him of the decision and provide information to come to the office to sign the lease agreement.

5. Corrected Transfer

LESSEE	APPLICANT	LOT	SEC	ACRES	LOCATION	MAP	Species	Proposed Activity
Michael Snyder	Joseph McGee*	2946	B	1.40	Shelter Island Channel	28	Hard Clam	Traditional On-Bottom Planting

\*Rescind Transfer approved on April 21, 2025

LESSEE	APPLICANT	LOT	SEC	ACRES	LOCATION	MAP	Species	Proposed Activity
Michael Snyder	Joseph McGee*	2574	B	2.00	Scull Bay	27	Hard Clam	Traditional On-Bottom Planting

\*Corrected Transfer

Mr. Normant informed the Council that the Bureau was notified by the lessee’s involved in the recent transfer that were was an error. The transfer of lease 2946 in Shelter Island Channel from Mr. Snyder to Mr. McGee and subsequently approved by the Council at the April 21, 2025 meeting was made in error. Mr. Snyder and Mr. McGee transferred the wrong lease and meant to transfer lease 2574 in Scull Bay. Mr. Normant stated that the front office prepped the transfer paperwork before they came to the office on the lessee’s request, both parties had reviewed the application paperwork, signed the transfer paperwork and Mr. McGee had signed a new lease agreement. The Bureau confirmed with both parties that this was a mistake. Mr. Normant stated that in the past, the front office staff would pre-fill paperwork to assist growers, but moving forward the transfer parties will be required to fill in the paperwork themselves.

The Council rescinded the transfer that was approved on April 21, 2025 of lease 2946 in Shelter Island Channel from Mr. Snyder to Mr. McGee and return the lease to Mr. Snyder on a motion made by Mr. Mathis and Mr. Felder. The corrected transfer of lease 2574 in Scull Bay from Mr. Snyder to Mr. McGee, pending paperwork, was approved by a motion made by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Felder.

6. Temporary Lease Applications – Barnegat Light Suspension

Mr. Babb stated that the Commissioner gave approval to allow the two applications for temporary leases at Sunrise Beach in Barnegat Bay, that the Council approved, to move forward. The applicants have been notified. Mr. Johnson commended the efforts made by the Council, Leasing Committee, and the DEP in response to this situation.

7. Old Business

Hard Clam Management Plan Committee

The Hard Clam Management Plan Committee met the week prior and was well attended. Mr. Normant said the main discussion was about the structure of the plan and suggestions on what should be included in the plan. There was discussion on reporting and how to implement. Mr. Normant commended the progress of the Committee and for providing constructive input from various sectors. The Committee will be moving forward in developing the plan and the goal was to have a completed plan by the end of 2026.

#### Regulatory Committee Update

The Regulatory Committee's Summary Report to the Council was also sent to the Committee for feedback. The Council would be informed if the Committee suggested any changes to the report prior to the next meeting. The Council agreed that they would review and discuss it at the next meeting. Mr. Babb reminded the Council that this phase of rule development was informal input from the Committee prior to a rule being developed. Mr. Babb recommended highlighting key topics/issues to discuss in more detail at forthcoming public meetings without having to discuss every topic which has already been deliberated at the Committee level. All meeting summaries of the past Committee meetings were attached to the summary if the Council wished to reference them for more detail on the conversations. The Council asked that the Committee members be notified that the report was going to be discussed at the next meeting if they wished to attend.

#### Hydrographic Surveys – Shelter Island & Scull Bay

Mr. DiVaccaro notified the Council that the most recent hydrographic surveys that were completed at Shelter Island Channel and Scull Bay. A total of twenty corners were surveyed, and the backlog was being addressed.

#### 2024 Seed Importation Data

Ms. Swain provided a quick summary of seed importation. As per Title 50, prior to the importation of out-of-state shellfish intended to be placed in NJ waters, the Commissioner must review and approve each application. Ms. Swain provided data on seed importation requests the Bureau reviewed in 2024. In 2024, eastern oysters were the only species included in applications and no applications for hard clams were received. The Bureau received a total of 25 applications for 16,640,000 oyster seed and 1,400 oyster broodstock. Seed size ranged from 2mm to 24mm and broodstock size ranged from 75mm to 100mm. Of the total 25 applications, eight applications requested 4mm or less and 15 applications included 5mm-24mm sized seed. There were three applications for broodstock. The states that seed/broodstock were imported from included: North Carolina (4), Maryland (4), Virginia (14), Maine (1), Rhode Island (1), and Connecticut (1). Mr. Normant reminded the Council that hard clam seed being imported from out of state also needed to be approved, not just oysters.

There was a discussion on the benefits of knowing what was being produced in this state in addition to what was being imported to have a better idea of the economic impact and to better understand industry needs. Dr. Acquafredda agreed to share data from the Rutgers's Aquaculture Innovative Center and could provide an annual report on what was sold in and out of state, which was mostly for oysters, bay scallops, and surf clam.

#### Water Quality Suspension – Status

Mr. Gaine asked if there were any updates to the water quality suspensions that impacted Barnegat Light and Ludlam Bay. Mr. Poretti notified the Council that the Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring (BMWM) continued to take samples and had increased the sample rate in the area. When the average reached below the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, the waters would be reopened, but it had not reached that threshold yet. Mr. Poretti added that he couldn't predict when the waters may reopen as it was based on the data being collected. He was hopeful with the way the data was trending it could be a few months.

## 8. New Business

### Marine Law Enforcement Update

Deputy Chief. Scott explained that two officers recently graduated from the academy and one of those officers would be joining the marine region. Overall compliance with shellfish aquaculture has been good, but there were some open cases that he was not able to speak about. Deputy Chief Scott encouraged anyone to call him if they had a question or needed clarification. The Marine Law Enforcement Unit planned to attend Council meetings more regularly to provide updates related to commercial and recreational shellfish enforcement actions.

### Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Permit (CSAP) – Compliance Advisory

A Compliance Advisory was issued by the BMWWM in June 2025 to shellfish aquaculture growers highlighting current requirements that were listed in the CSAP in relation to bird deterrents and encouraging growers to reach out to the BMWWM if they were seeing an issue with birds. In addition, the Compliance Advisory highlighted new requirements for the 2026 CSAP that included adding maintenance plans, bird deterrent plans and gear marking. Mr. Poretti would like to hold meetings with the growers to get input on additional potential requirements for the 2026 CSAP.

The Council recommended reconvening the Structural Aquaculture Committee to discuss the potential changes and concerns to the CSAP as outlined in the compliance advisory. It was suggested to open the meeting to the public and include the BMWWM, Marine Law Enforcement, and the Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries.

Deputy Chief. Scott added that as per FDA requirements, Marine Law Enforcement was required to inspect all aquaculture operations. If the gear was adequately marked, it would be a benefit to Marine Enforcement to know who the gear belonged to and ensure they were completing that tasks to stay in compliance with FDA. Mr. Normant also noted that the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Nationwide Permit 48 (required for shellfish aquaculture activity) required all aquaculture gear to be marked. The USACE have accepted the growers CID number in place of writing their name, address, etc. on gear. There was discussion on the extent of what gear needed to be marked per Army Corps standards. The USACE has agreed to come to a Council meeting to discuss Nationwide Permit 48. The Council was supportive of that effort.

### Rutgers Growers Forum – Birds & Aquaculture Gear

Dr. Acquafredda updated the Council regarding the Growers Forum for birds and aquaculture gear held on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Acquafredda noted that he was approached by Mr. Frost who had concerns and wanted to provide an opportunity for growers to work together and address these issues. The meeting was very well attended by growers, state representatives, and Rutgers staff. Dr. Acquafredda noted there was discussion on the process of water sampling, but growers were also encouraged to self-police themselves to ensure neighbor compliance. Ultimately, physical barriers were discussed at the meeting and most growers had success with spikes and monofilament string. Mr. Poretti added that the Bureau's updated quality assurance project plan was recently approved and would be available on their website if growers wanted to have more information on how the Bureau conducted sampling. Mr. Gaine added that the main issue that growers needed to focus on was how birds interacted with gear. There was an opportunity to discuss science and other factors in the future through the ISSC, but the current issue was the bird waste and its impact to water quality classification. Rutgers may host an additional meeting in the Fall if necessary.

## 9. Public Comment

Mr. Fleetwood raised concerns regarding vessels operated by Viking Yacht and their impact to the safety of his crew working leases along the Mullica River. The vessels tend to operate at high speeds which causes a large wake. Mr. Stueber noted that he had been in contact with Viking Yacht regarding this issue and they would be notifying all boat captains to

slow down. Mr. Normant noted that in addition to the safety of vessels in the area, the large wakes also impacted oyster beds in the area by eroding the sod banks that fall on those beds. The Council agreed to write a letter to Viking Yacht asking their captains to respect the navigational rules of the waterway, which included slowing down near vessels working the leases and the state managed oyster beds on a motion by Mr. Mathis and seconded by Mr. Gaine.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Felder and seconded by Mr. Mathis.

10. Date time and place of next meeting:

DATE: July 21, 2025  
TIME: 6:00 PM  
LOCATION: Nacote Creek Research Station, Port Republic (in-person/virtual hybrid)

**Public Attendees:**

Eggert Olafsson  
Steve Fleetwood  
Mike Acquafredda  
Jordan LoPinto  
Chris Scales  
Steve Frost  
Brandon G\*  
Susan Bently\*  
Jen Resciniti\*  
Matt Gregg\*  
Matthew Matusky\*  
Chris Carroll\*  
William Mayer\*  
Tommy Burke\*  
Tom Ertle\*  
Chuck Gehman\*  
Donald Burke\*  
Matt Genna\*

**State Representative Attendees**

Brian Scott, Bureau of Law Enforcement\*  
Liia Carpenter\*, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Lauren Strazzeri\*, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Natalie Dragos\*, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Jenny Tomko\*, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Michael Lindner\*, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Amanda Wenczel-Arians\*, Department of Agriculture  
Nina Colagiovanni, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Lisa DiElmo, Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring

*\*Attended virtually*