

MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE  
DELAWARE BAY SECTION OF THE NEW JERSEY SHELLFISHERIES COUNCIL MEETING

Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory  
MS Teams Conference Call  
Bivalve, NJ 08349  
Tuesday, May 6, 2025  
6:00 P.M.

Present were: Chairman: Warren Hollinger (Cumberland County)  
Vice Chairman: Steven Fleetwood (Cumberland County)  
Councilman: Richard Malinowski (Salem County)  
Councilman: Scott Sheppard (Cumberland County)  
Councilman: Vacant (Cape May/Salem County)

State/Fed Reps: Craig Tomlin, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Russell Babb, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Alissa Wilson, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Karen Bates, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries\*  
Michael Lindner, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Michael Moore, Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring\*  
Amanda Wenczel, Department of Agriculture\*

Haskin Lab: David Bushek, Director  
Jen Gius, Laboratory Researcher IV  
Iris Burt, Laboratory Technician\*  
Michael Aquafredda, Aquaculture Specialist\*  
*\*Virtual Attendance*

General Public

*In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 13:1B-30 et. seq), a notice of this meeting was posted April 30, 2025, with the Secretary of State's Office, State House, Trenton, NJ and sent to the NJ Advanced Media news outlets. This meeting will be recorded.*

Mr. Tomlin welcomed everyone to the May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Delaware Bay Section of the Shellfisheries Council stating the meeting was held under the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A 13:1B-30 et seq.) as mentioned above. Mr. Tomlin then performed a roll call for Council members noting that representatives from Haskin Shellfish Research Lab and NJDEP were also present.

1. Delaware Bay Office Revenue Collected – B. Hollinger

Chairman Hollinger presented the Revenue collected by the Delaware Bay Shellfisheries office for the months of March and April of 2025 as detailed below.

1.1. Revenue Collected for March 2025: \$12,150.00

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Nets	\$3,541.00	Assigned Fee	\$300.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$3,300.00	Commercial SF	\$250.00
Dredge Boat License	\$2,142.00	Dealer License	\$200.00
AC/DB Crab Dredge	\$700.00	Application Fees	\$162.00
Menhaden	\$674.00	Recreational SF	\$20.00
Lease Fees	\$441.00	Non-Res Rec SF	\$20.00
Tonging*	\$400.00		

\*Revenue towards Oyster Resource Development Account

1.2. Revenue Collected for April 2025: \$57,307.00

License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Oyster Tags*	\$47,580.00	Menhaden	\$104.00
Assigned Fee/Rutgers	\$4,000.00	Application Fees	\$98.00
Nets	\$1,911.00	Commercial Shellfish	\$50.00
Commercial Crab Pot	\$1,900.00	Special Use Permit/BLM	\$50.00
Dredge Boat Renewal	\$1,290.00	Non-Res Rec SF	\$20.00
AC/DB Crab Dredge	\$300.00	Duplicate Fee	\$4.00

\*Revenue towards Oyster Resource Development Account

2. Oyster Resource Development Account (as of 05/05/2025) – B. Hollinger

Encumbered: \$0.00  
Expended: \$60,361.44  
Uncommitted: \$249,687.45

Chairman Hollinger reviewed the Oyster Resource Development Account figures shown above.

3. Old Business

3.1. Red Knot Stakeholder Committee Update – B. Hollinger

Chairman Hollinger stated there had been no meetings, but it was expected that the birds will be showing up soon. Mr. Tomlin advised that he had been in contact with the Endangered and Non-game Species Program who had been putting out signs. He added that the birds were not here yet so we were continuing with the standard plan of the PBO going into effect the May 7<sup>th</sup>. Vice Chairman Fleetwood asked when the red knots were expected to arrive. Mr. Tomlin explained they typically arrived the by the first week of May. He elaborated that if they come earlier then expected, the aquaculture farmers would need to change their timings and work schedule, but if they leave earlier then the restrictions would be lifted.

3.2. Financial Disclosure Statement – B. Hollinger

Chairman Hollinger noted that the financial disclosure statements came via email, and it was the easiest one he has done in decades.

3.3. Oyster Tonging Fishery Update – C. Tomlin

2024-2025 Oyster Tonging Harvest Summary	
Month	Bushels
November 2024	105
December 2024	175
January 2025	88
February 2025	122
March 2025	197
April 2025	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>720</b>

Mr. Tomlin updated the Council that during the season, 850 tags were purchased with most of the harvest coming from Nantuxent Cove and the remainder from Cedar Creek. In comparison to last year, the bushel count was slightly higher but there were more participants and a longer season. Chairman Hollinger stated that he got a report in the Marine Fisheries Council packet that several tickets were issued to tongers for hand scraping amongst other things.

3.4. 2025 Direct Market Update – C. Tomlin

Bed	Boat Days	Harvest	CPUE	% of Region bu.
Cohansey	7	1,232	176.0	61.3%
Ship John	8	778	97.3	38.7%
Shell Rock	0	0		
Bennies	22	3,480	158.2	42.0%
Bennies Sand	16	2,144	134.0	25.9%
Nantuxent	9	1,174	130.4	14.2%
New Beds	12	1,463	121.9	17.5%
Strawberry	1	5	5.0	0.1%
Ledge	1	24	24.0	0.3%
<b>MMM</b>	15	2,010	134.0	
<b>SR</b>	0	0		
<b>HMM</b>	61	8,290	135.9	
<b>Total</b>	76	10,300	135.5	

Mr. Tomlin presented the direct market season opened on April 7<sup>th</sup> and shall close November 28<sup>th</sup>. As of May 5<sup>th</sup>, nine initial quotas had been completed with sixteen quotas underway and approximately 11,500 bushels harvested. He noted that having people move down bay had spread out the harvest into beds like Ledge, Strawberry, and New Beds. Cohansey currently had the highest CPUE with 176 bushels per day. Mr. Tomlin reminded the industry that they need everybody to submit their weekly and dealer reports on time. *Further discussion ensued.*

3.5. 2025 Intermediate Transplant Program Update – C. Tomlin

Mr. Tomlin reported that the intermediate transplant began on April 28<sup>th</sup> and that within the seven days of transplant commencing, close to 35 million oysters were moved to areas on Bennies and Shell Rock with an average of 966 oysters per bushel. A transplant from the Medium Mortality Transplant region of approximately 12,000 to 18,000 bushels was to start the following day to the Medium Mortality Market region, after which a transplant of approximately 10,000 bushels from the Very Low Mortality region to the Medium Mortality Transplant region would occur.

Mr. Tomlin also addressed questions that had been asked about the oyster per bushel numbers because the transplant this year had been phenomenal. He noted the table from the stock assessment had the oyster per bushel for the Low Mortality Region at 492, that was the long-term average of the transplants from that area. There was a great spat set in 2022 which caused the bushels per oyster to spike. Mr. Gaine asked if the oysters per bushel figure was calculated using a running average or a set period of time. Mr. Bushek explained it was a total average, and each year is added onto the time series. Mr. Tomlin added had a sliding average been used, then the numbers would have been closer. Vice Chairman Fleetwood thanked Ms. Gius for looking into the numbers. Mr. Reeves asked if the percentage of market oysters was like what was shown in the stock assessment, 8.5% for the Low Mortality region. Ms. Gius explained that it was the average for all the Low Mortality beds and since only Arnolds was being harvested, she ran the numbers before the meeting, and it was slightly lower than 8.5%. Vice Chairman Fleetwood asked if the 8.5% was being used to calculate the added quota. Ms. Gius confirmed that was correct. Mr. Gaine asked if there were markers that could be used during the stock assessment to anticipate changes. Mr. Tomlin agreed and stated that previously the number was off and had it been converted year by year then the transplant number of oysters would remain the same, but the number of bushels would have been lower.

Mr. Tomlin recounted that since funds from the Cultch account were low, the Council set each license to be responsible for moving 600 bushels from the Low Mortality transplant region for a total of 48,000 bushels. This meant that the Oyster Research Development Account would pay for 20,837 bushels from that region. He noted that using oysters per bushel, the total came to 295,200 oysters per license and the transplant had averaged 966 oysters per bushel. He continued, saying that using number of oysters each license was responsible for moving and dividing that by the average of oysters per bushel, each license should have been responsible for 306 bushels. It was then noted that this number was not final, as the transplant was still occurring. This would also mean that meeting the goal of 600 bushels per license was not possible because of how successful the transplant has been, and the 68,000 bushels from the low mortality region would not be need to be reached in order to meet the oyster moved goal. Mr. Gaine asked if the 600 bushels was calculated by the number of oysters to which Chairman Hollinger replied that the industry was to transplant half of the oysters on their own cost and the Council would pay for the other half, all based off the number of oysters. Mr. Bushek asked if the numbers have been converted into total oysters instead of the number of bushels to which Mr. Tomlin replied that is essentially what the calculation does, it just converts it back to bushels for the Council to have a metric on which to base the fee. Mr. McConnell stated that he would like to continue to keep on moving oysters since the bed is holding up. Mr. Tomlin explained that we cannot exceed 33 million oysters per the Stock Assessment Review Committee, which after a long discussion had already double the exploitation rate of any other year for that region.

**Vice Chairman Fleetwood made a motion to amend the 600 bushels to 306 bushels per quota, which was to be recalculated using the average oysters per bushel of the Low Mortality transplant once completed. Councilman Malinowski seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.**

3.6. 2025 Vibrio Control Plan – C. Tomlin

Mr. Tomlin highlighted the minor edits to the updated Vibrio Control Plan which included: changing Bureau of Shellfisheries to Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries, expanding Vibrio sampling from just Delaware Bay to include Barnegat Bay, and the use of coolers with adequate ice were considered proper shading on boats for harvested shellfish product.

3.7. Gear Marking – C. Tomlin

Mr. Tomlin reported that the Bureau sent out a letter to all lease holders, reminding them of the necessity to mark their aquaculture gear. The general permit, individual permit, lease agreement and Nationwide Permit all require marking of structures if used. The best way to do this was to contact the U.S. Coast Guard's Division 5 Private Aids to Navigation (PATON) Manager. Mr. Gaine asked about lighting requirements and Mr. Tomlin advised him to speak with the PATON manager. Mr. Gaine also asked about size requirements and if he could make his own. Mr. Tomlin responded that they would need to meet the regulations. Mr. Babb stated it was a liability issue as well, especially with floating gear. It was also noted that permits have conditions and permit holders are obligated to meet them or the permits are invalid.

3.8. Vessel Tracking Device Update – A. Wilson

Ms. Wilson updated the Council that all units were on the vessels, and they were currently being monitored to ensure they are functioning properly. There had been some minor issues, mainly how the unit gets a power supply which had been resolved. Accuracy between the beds being called in and the beds being worked was ongoing and so far, there had not been any glitches or discrepancies. An example was given that it can be seen what grids are being worked and we can tell if they were enhancement sites or not. Mr. Reeves asked if at the end of the season, a graph of each bed could be created to show which ones were worked along with information to show the quality. Ms. Wilson explained that it was being worked on to be able to utilize the data from the units in the best, yet simplest, manner possible without having to get other bureaus involved for permission purposes.

4. New Business

4.1. Resurvey and the Oyster Industry Science Steering Committee

Mr. Reeves asked when the next resurvey of Arnolds will take place because he would like to go and see the process. Ms. Gius advised she was waiting until the end of transplant, expecting to resurvey at the end of May or early June. Mr. Reeves also asked if the Oyster Industry Science Steering Committee was going to meet after the survey. Ms. Gius explained she was also waiting to schedule that until transplant was completed, and that the Committee meeting could happen before or after the resurvey. Mr. Reeves addressed the Council inquiring whether Mr. Gaine could be added to the Committee. **Councilman Sheppard made a motion to place Mr. Gaine on the Oyster Industry Science Steering Committee. Vice Chairman**

**Fleetwood seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.**

#### 4.2. Potential Funding for the Oyster Industry

Mr. Tomlin announced that Cape May County reached out several times to donate \$44,000 to the Oyster Resource Development Account to help pay for oyster transplants. Chairman Hollinger noted that it would not be used this year because the same situation will more than likely occur next year. He also stated that Cumberland County was trying to figure out from where they can get money, how to donate it, and intended on talking to Cape May County to see how that was figured out internally. Industry members asked for an update to the line budget which would not be finalized until July 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Kilby advised that legislation had been put in by Senator Testa and she just received a report from the NJ Office of Legislative Services identifying the legislation put forth during this period and that she would check on its status.

Mr. Gaine thanked Senator Testa and Assemblyman McClellan for their assistance in bringing attention to funding issues. He also gave an update that four meetings were held to address the short-term problem of having money shortages. There was a meeting with Cape May County, the Economic Development Authority (EDA), the Governor's office, as well as NJ Fish and Wildlife. Grant solutions had been proposed to help in the long term. Mr. Tomlin advised that the EDA said they would like to have a meeting to talk to industry members about grants and small business funding. Ms. Kilby suggested that there should be a separate meeting from a Council meeting and that as many members of the Legislative District 1 team that can attend will also be there.

Mr. Babb updated the Council that since the last meeting, approval for funding the Shellplant Program has been secured for anywhere from \$200,000-\$400,000. Whatever the shell supplier had was to be planted in June or July and then will be shifted into purchasing shell to be stockpiled for next year. Mr. Tomlin updated the Council that the request to increase the cost of harvest tags was moving up the chain.

#### 4.3. Jersey Fresh Standards for Bivalve Shellfish

Mr. Williams asked to discuss the Jersey Fresh Bivalve Shellfish standards and if the Council would like to provide comments, or perhaps make their own standards because things were not moving forward at the Aquaculture Advisory Council (AAC) level. Mr. Fleetwood Jr. asked if the standard was that the seed needs to be from New Jersey and cannot be bought out of state. Chairman Hollinger said the seed can be bought from out of state, but it must be raised in New Jersey. Mr. Fleetwood Jr. asked if it included wild caught oysters and Mr. Williams explained that according to the AAC language, it did not include the wild fishery. Mr. Williams also stated that he believed seed should have to be sourced in New Jersey since Jersey Fresh is an above and beyond program. Mr. Gaine further explained that the bill that was proposed contains requirements that the Department of Agriculture would mandate for those who elect to join the Jersey Fresh program. The purpose is to highlight and separate New Jersey products from out of state products because Jersey Fresh is a good brand that people know and will get the public asking for Jersey oysters. Chairman Hollinger stated the willingness of the Council to review, edit, and send a different version of the standards. Mr. Gaine expressed his desire for all oyster industry members to be included; not just aquaculture but the wild fishery as well and if any sector is excluded to change it from Jersey Fresh Aquaculture to Jersey Fresh

Seafood or Jersey Fresh Shellfish. The industry already had systems, licenses, and requirements that other industries did not which alleviated many of the processes put into the standards. Chairman Hollinger stated that the model ordinance should be referenced in those instances and the object of Jersey Fresh is marketing and advertising. Ms. Kilby cautioned that when it came to standards, they should avoid using too many words or definitions. Chairman Hollinger stated that he would call to see what could be done with the Jersey Fresh program. Mr. Babb suggested writing a letter specifying that if criteria are necessary, the Council would like to help with developing those criteria. Vice Chairman Fleetwood asked if the letter would comment on including the wild caught fishery. Mr. Fleetwood Jr. stated that it was farming by putting shell out, catching spat, harvesting, and propagation. Mr. Bushek noted that there was not a single animal product in the Jersey Fresh program, it was created for produce. Ms. Wenczel commented that standards were in the law which were basis for an inspection that must occur as part of the Jersey Fresh program and those standards refer to the USDA.

5. Public Comment

6. Meeting Schedule – B. Hollinger

Date, time, and place of the next meeting:

DATE: July 1, 2025

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory and MS Teams

7. Adjournment – Council

**Vice Chairman Fleetwood motioned to adjourn the meeting, Councilman Sheppard seconded the motion. All Councilmen were in favor and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.**

Attendees

Ned Gaine

Tim Reeves

Steve Fleetwood Jr.

Tasker Robbins

Todd McConnell

Arvene Kilby

Matt Williams\*