

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

Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory  
MS Teams Conference Call  
Bivalve, NJ 08349  
Tuesday September 9, 2025  
6:00 PM

Present were:

Council: 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: Russel Babb, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Andrew Hassall, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Alissa Wilson, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries  
Karen Bates, Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries\*  
Virginia Wheatley, Department of Health\*  
Amanda Wenzcel, Department of Agriculture\*

Haskin Lab: Jen Gius, Laboratory Researcher IV  
Iris Burt, Laboratory Technician  
Sarah Borsetti, Fisheries Researcher

*\*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 August 27, 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. Babb welcomed everyone to the September 9<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. Babb then performed a roll call for Council members and noted that representatives from various state agencies and Haskin Shellfish Research Lab staff were present.

1. Minutes from the May and August Council meetings were presented to the Council. Chairman Hollinger stated they would be held until the next meeting for approval.

2. Delaware Bay Office Revenue Collected for August 2025: \$34,394.00

License Type	Total	License Type	Total	License Type	Total
Oyster Tags	\$25,500	Nets	\$227	Recreational Crab Dredge	\$15
Assign/Charters & Lease	\$8,000	Menhaden	\$206	Recreational Shellfish	\$10
Comm Crab Pot	\$400	Application Fees	\$30	Duplicates	\$6

3. Oyster Resource Development Account (*as of 09/08/2025*)

Encumbered: \$0.00  
Expended: \$161,207.55  
Uncommitted: \$59,019.47

Mr. Babb gave an update that the \$44,000.00 donated by Cape May County was approved and the money was to be deposited into the Oyster Resource Development Account (ORDA). He also noted that 119,413 bushels were planted during shell plant on Bennies Sand, Shell Rock, and Ship John of which payment for was covered by the ORDA in the amount of \$161,207.55 and the DEP Mitigation Account in the amount of just over \$250,000.00. That left between 150,000.00 to \$200,00.00 committed from the NJDEPs Mitigation Account to bridge the funding deficit for next year.

4. Lease Grounds Transactions

4.1. Applications for Consideration - Alice Burke attended the meeting virtually. The Council made sure the proper paperwork was submitted and notified the applicant that they would vote on the application at the November meeting.

Applicant	Section	Lot	Acreage
Alice Burke	ADZ – 4	15	3

5. Bureau of Law Enforcement Report

Mr. Babb gave an update that was provided by Deputy Chief Scott. Anthony Ranaudo, a new CPO, was scheduled to start the Field Training Officer program on 9/6/25, working alongside veteran CPOs for the next three months. Upon completion, he was to be assigned to the tidal waters from the Toms River to Great Egg Inlet. All sworn officers completed extensive defensive tactics training as mandated by the Attorney General’s Office. The Marine Region took delivery of two new, fully outfitted Ford F-150 patrol vehicles with eSummons capabilities and were integrated with a new Computer-aided Dispatch and Body-worn Camera systems. A new Joint Enforcement Agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service had been signed by both agencies and was to go into effect October 1<sup>st</sup>. Tautog summonses issued were approaching 50 with many of the summonses issued involving multiple fish, and in one case alone 47 tautog were seized.

6. Old Business

6.1. Red Knot Stakeholder Committee Update

Chairman Hollinger advised there was nothing to report but did ask about the status of the US Fish & Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Programmatic Biological Opinion (PBO). Mr. Babb stated that there had been meetings with the Army Corps of Engineers and USFWS with another meeting scheduled for the following week. He noted that the group was on a good track and needed to review the document. The PBO could not simply be reissued, rather it needed to be updated with the latest relevant data and research. A discussion ensued regarding Conservation Measures and the ability to change or update measures before the reissuance. It was decided by the Council and industry to have the PBO be reissued and let any changes occur via the adaptive management process rather than request a new Committee be put together to address concerns.

6.2. 2025 Vibrio Update

Ms. Wheatley reviewed the reporting and investigation process involved with Vibrio illness case management. Ms. Wheatley also updated the Council that to date, 38 cases had been reported which included “single and multi-source” cases, meaning the shellfish were harvested out of state but the individual lives in NJ and/or an out-of-state individual ate at a NJ restaurant, the

shellfish dealer is located in NJ, as well as other factors. This summer there were 5 *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* culture confirmed cases, 1 *Vibrio vulnificus* culture confirmed, and 2 *Vibrio* C/D+ non-culture confirmed cases (case was confirmed as *Vibrio*, just not identified down to species). These cases involved the ingestion of raw clams, raw sushi, and raw oysters. Per the CDC, “Anyone can get a *Vibrio* infection. Some medical conditions and treatments can increase your risk for infection and severe complications.” Health conditions in the reported 2025 cases included gastrointestinal issues, alcoholism, kidney disease, liver disease, diabetes, cancer, and more, with ages ranging from mid-twenties to mid-eighties. There was one case where sadly the individual passed away which involved a 27-year-old who suffered from alcoholism and liver disease and ate raw oysters and cooked seafood at a restaurant in New Mexico. It was an open investigation involving the restaurant whose invoices implicated two out-of-state certified shellfish dealers and one NJ certified shellfish dealer. The restaurant investigation did not identify any temperature issues, and the NJ dealer demonstrated temperature control via cooler logs, temperature recording device wheel printouts, and shipping temperatures. Ms. Wheatly emphasized that temperature control and recordkeeping are critical.

6.3. Direct Market Harvest Program Update

Mr. Hassall reminded the Council that the direct market season opened on April 7<sup>th</sup>. He advised that Shell Rock and the Medium Mortality Region remained open. As of 9/8/2025, 57 quotas were completed, 12 quotas are underway, and 11 quotas had not been started. Approximately 58,000 bushels had been harvested with approximately 5,600 bushels remaining on the Medium Mortality Market region and 9,700 bushels remaining on Shell Rock.

Bed	Boat Days	Harvest	CPUE	% of Region bu.
Cohansey	13	2,039	157	18.2%
Ship John	104	9,183	91	81.8%
Shell Rock	58	10,296	186	
Bennies	50	7,682	154	20.8%
Bennies Sand	135	21,796	161	58.9%
Nantuxent	40	4,755	119	12.9%
New Beds	21	2,530	120	6.8%
Strawberry	1	5	5	0.0%
Hog Shoal	2	189	95	0.5%
Ledge	1	24	24	0.1%
<b>MMM</b>	117	11,222	96	19.2%
<b>SR</b>	58	10,296	178	17.6%
<b>HMM</b>	250	36,981	148	63.2%
<b>Total</b>	385	58,499	138	

6.4. Spat Monitoring Program Update

Mr. Hassall summarized that between July 10<sup>th</sup> and August 21<sup>st</sup>, spat was observed at eight sites. The most spat was observed at Fortescue, Cape Shore and Money Island. Monitoring was scheduled through September 25<sup>th</sup>, unless another spat set was observed. Mr. Gaine requested a more in-depth evaluation once the program was complete for this year. Mr.

Hassall responded that more detailed data would be presented at the next meeting.

6.5. Dermo Monitoring Update

Ms. Burt explained that water temperatures peaked in July and were starting to decline, and that as of earlier that day temperatures were around 74°F out on the beds. Salinity increased quite a bit in the past month or two and with that Dermo increased as well. Numbers like this had not been seen in a decade or more, and over 40% of oysters from Cohansey to New Beds had advanced Dermo. The boxes did not show any new mortality until the end of August, but it was not significant. Mr. Reeves asked if more information would be provided at the November Council meeting. Ms. Burt replied yes, and that she creates a report every month that is posted to the Rutgers website. She also noted that the Cape Shore samples had not been completed yet. A discussion ensued about water temperature and trends in specific beds rather than the whole Delaware Bay system.

6.6. Regulatory Committee Report

Mr. Babb reminded the Council that the Executive Summary report went out on July 29<sup>th</sup> and had been posted to the website. He noted that only one Council member provided questions and comments so far, but anyone can contact the Bureau with any questions or comments over the next few months. A discussion ensued on whether a presentation of the summary could be provided due to the rule-making process not being public at this time. Mr. Babb explained we can provide a small presentation to have an open discussion on some of the concepts.

6.7. Bushel Tax Increase Rule

Mr. Babb stated that the rule proposal to change the fee from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per bushel was posted on August 4<sup>th</sup> and had a 60-day comment period closing on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. There was discussion about the Council writing a letter asking for more flexibility and the ability to select a range of fees without disrupting the entire process. Mr. Babb explained it was a constructive comment regarding the statutory authority of the Council and would not imply a substantive change. Vice Chairman Fleetwood expressed his concerns with the time frame because the funds were crucial to the following year's transplant and shell plant. Councilman Sheppard expressed his concern with doubling the fee without a quota increase. A discussion ensued about the cost of transplant, the repercussions of changing the fee in the rule proposal, and the amount of money in the accounts to cover enhancement efforts. Mr. Babb stated that he would reach out to see what the implications would be to change the fee and inquire about other options, then get back to the Council.

6.8. US Army Corps of Engineers

Mr. Babb notified the Council that the Army Corps of Engineers was to attend the October Atlantic Coast Council meeting as well as the November Delaware Bay Council meeting. They plan to discuss the nationwide permit while giving the industry an opportunity to put a face to a name.

7. New Business

7.1. Oyster Industry Science Steering Committee (OISSC) Meeting Update

Ms. Gius explained that the OISSC was designed to have meetings that bridge the gap between the stock assessment meeting and the end of the harvest season to prioritize science initiatives. It is made up of industry members, NJDEP, and Rutgers staff. They met on 9/3 with updates for

the long-term port sampling program, results from the spring re-survey on the upper beds, Stock Assessment Review Committee (SARC) nominations, and dredge calibration. The upper beds held up well to the spring transplant and two nominations were made for seats on the SARC, including Mitch Tarnowski for the management seat and Kathryn Alcox for the academic seat. Updating the dredge efficiencies was scheduled for the end of September using the fishing vessel Howard Sockwell equipped with oyster dredges and the research vessel James Joseph with patent tongs. Another meeting will be held in November.

7.2. Rutgers University Survey: Farm, Fisher, Aquaculture Wellness

Ms. Iwicki reported that the Rutgers University Department of Family and Community Health Sciences was running a survey for food producers in New Jersey to understand the stressors the community was facing to better provide services and programs in the future. She had a slide presented with survey information including a QR code to the online survey, and had similar handouts provided for anyone to share.

7.3. Legislative Updates

Mr. Babb stated that the same report was provided to the Marine Fisheries Council and there were no updates other than the person responsible for providing the updates was working on condensing them to be centric to the industry.

7.4. Blue Convergence Fund

Mr. Babb noted that the Council drafted a letter of support for a grant proposal to advance resiliency in New Jersey's oyster fishery. He explained the funding would enable engagement with academic experts that have experience using the types of data being collected by the GPS tracking units. Ms. Borsetti added that it would enable further engagement with the Delaware River and Basin Commission to utilize their database and outreach.

8. Public Comment

Mr. Reeves asked Ms. Gius when the fall survey would occur, and she confirmed it would be late October early November.

Mr. Williams asked to talk about access at the Aquaculture Development Zone (ADZ) due to the large number of people down there that do not appear to have an ADZ lease or if it is known that they have the correct permits. He had been asked to sublet his shed lot and he was concerned about activity that may not necessarily be legal. He noted that this summer there were multiple refrigeration trucks down at the ADZ picking up product which beats up the access road. Mr. Babb said that the Bureau will regroup internally and see what options were available. The concern was that the land acquisition occurred via Green Acres funds and there were commercial operations using the road. Mr. Gaine added that he felt that because he had the correct permits he was held to a higher standard. He provided examples of each worker coming in their own vehicle and parking wherever they like, using ADZ shed lots for non-ADZ lease lots.

9. Date, time, and place of next meeting:

DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory and Microsoft Teams

10. Adjournment – **Vice Chairman Fleetwood made the motion to adjourn, Councilman Malinowski seconded. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.**

Public Attendees:

Timothy Reeves  
Ryan McGaha  
Edward Gaine  
Carolyn Iwicki  
Sarah Borsetti  
Iris Burt  
Jennifer Gius  
Jason Bowne  
Alice Burke\*  
Matt Williams\*  
Jack Burke\*\*  
Steven Fleetwood, Jr.\*\*  
Lisa Calvo\*\*

\*Virtual

\*\*Phone