

**MINUTES
MEETING
CT SEAFOOD COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 4, 2009
DEP MARINE FISHERIES, OLD LYME
1:30 P.M.**

Co-Chair Larry Williams called meeting to order at 1:40 p.m.

Present: Mark Alexander, Nancy Balcom, David Carey, Bill Clayton, Paul Formica, Tessa Getchis, D.J. King, Art Medeiros, Linda Piotrowicz, Eric Smith, Larry Williams and Barbara Gordon, Executive Director.

Motion to approve minutes of previous meeting of January 7, 2009. Seconded.
Discussion: Correction on Pg. 1, 2nd sentence from bottom of page, should read “D.J. King reported incredible number of oysters” “on” pots instead of “in” pots.

Co-chair Mike Theiler was not able to attend meeting due to a speaking engagement at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy re: Coast Guard boarding of fishing vessels.

CO-CHAIR’S REPORT – LARRY WILLIAMS

Prices are stable; a surprise in this economy. Co-chair is pursuing other markets to push product. He is weighing future participation in farmers’ markets. Many people called after this past summer’s market to ask if he would return.

BUREAU DIRECTOR’S REPORT – DAVID CAREY

Spoke of East Coast Shellfish Growers’ application for membership. Executive Director will pay for Council’s membership.

Re: legislation:

Bill #5506 before the Environment Committee re: commercial fishing for striped bass. Amendment proposed to allow fishing for these predators.

Mark Alexander representing DEP Marine Fisheries reported that there was a vote at the Atlantic Marine Fisheries meeting to increase the state quota – but effort failed on procedural grounds. The report had not been betted through the Technical Committee.

Mark Alexander said the Commission vote was to initiate an addendum to increase the striper catch.

In May, the Commission can again vote to initiate addendum – could take 6 months, including round of hearings.

Discussion followed re: commercial vs recreational fisheries. D.J. King spoke of fishing for stripers since the age of 5. He has been a commercial fisherman for 40 years. There is now an explosion of stripers in Long Island Sound. They are destroying the rest of the LIS eco-system. Eels are gone; stripers are one of the biggest reasons for the shortage of lobsters. Stripers eat baby lobsters. There is a huge sport fishermen's lobby vs many fewer commercial fishermen.

Bill Clayton asked if there can be a study of spawning. Nancy Balcom and Tessa Getchis of Sea Grant responded that there may be funding to do so. Mark Alexander said that a study would probably not matter much.

Eric Smith, formerly DEP Marine Fisheries Director agreed with the previous comments. Said it is very difficult to go against sports fishermen. Science doesn't matter much when issues become emotional. Commercial fishermen need to be cautious when testifying about legislation; need to reflect understanding of sports fishermen, too.

Oddly enough there is a shortage of striped bass in Maine, where more restrictions are wanted.

Eric suggested trying to get sports fishermen to testify on commercial fishermen's behalf.

Question asked about a spear-fishing bill, but there is no information on such a bill.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries meets quarterly. The Technical Committee will look at striped bass issue.

David Carey spoke of other legislation re: record keeping of local shellfish commissions, docks, etc. to be done by Department of Health. Bill #5795 proposed by Rep. Terry Backer will be opposed.

Other proposed legislation would name the state research vessel the "JOHN H. VOLK", in memory of the former Bureau director.

Bureau Director further reported that the CT Fund for the Environment has notified the city of Bridgeport that it would like to see a plan of action to deal with sewage/storm drain pollution. A lawsuit will probably be filed. Shellfish beds could be closed, but this is doubtful. Fairfield and Stratford beds were closed for 200 days this past year due to Bridgeport situation.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – BARBARA GORDON

Ag Day at the Capitol will be held on Wednesday, March 18 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Seafood Council will be serving New England Clam Chowder, clams and oysters. ED will be getting 3 bids for the chowder and will also provide pens for the legislators' gift bags.

Legislative Reception will be held on Tuesday, May 19 in the Judiciary Room at the state capitol. Paul Formica offered to provide lobster bisque; clams, oysters and scallops will be served as well as an additional lobster item provided by the Lobstermens' Association.

ED pursuing appointment of new member to Council with Senator Martin Looney. Also pursuing funding to continue the lobster v-notch program with state and federal legislators.

Arthur Medeiros, president of the Southern New England Fishermen and Lobstermens' Association spoke of more restrictions being proposed for the fishing fleet.

Discussion followed on the effort by Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine to add aid for fishing industry to stimulus package.

Eric Smith urged caution in supporting any proposal which could in fact, backfire. Mesh size control is working.

D.J. King moved to support Arthur Medeiros' letter to elected officials re: saving the New England fishing industry and opposing National Marine Fisheries proposed regulations. Seconded. Discussion followed.

Need to meet conservation while saving the industry. Vote on motion; carried. ED will contact Senators Dodd and Lieberman to ask inclusion in Mass., Maine and R.I. effort to obtain some of the stimulus funds.

Bill Clayton mentioned that bait shops are also hurting because of restrictions. Cultural heritage is being lost. Poor people need to feed their families. They are now risking fines and arrests. One fish may be kept out of 50 caught due to size restrictions.

Legislators must be made aware of these hardships. In further discussion, Eric Smith said that statistics are difficult.

Council members will e-mail ED with issues. Meeting will be set up with federal legislators for discussion of these issues.

OLD BUSINESS

Linda Piotrowicz of the Marketing Dept. of the Dept. of Agriculture reported that the recent Farm-to-Chef program was very successful and well attended. Good communication between producers and users re: product availability. Two attendees at the meeting will be posting information on Facebook and Google.

D.J. King appeared on radio station WICC from Bridgeport. Station looking for other participants.

Nancy Balcom reported that the CT logo plastic bags cannot be purchased at the present time due to the economy. Members expressed disappointment.

Tessa Getchis reported that there is a nationwide effort at the University of Idaho to educate the public on the benefits and risks of eating fish. Nancy and Tessa will be piloting the effort through Sea Grant. Seeking appropriate audiences. Tessa will e-mail ED and Linda Piotrowicz with information to present to area hospitals who would be potential audiences.

Bill Clayton asked if white suckers can be added to the inland bait licenses. Mark Alexander said the DEP will handle issue through regulations. Bill also spoke of an interstate trade problem re: transporting critters such as snapping turtles through the state.

Members were reminded of the Boston Seafood Show to be held on March 15 – 17. Several members will attend on their own.

No further business. Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m. by motion, seconded and approved.

Respectfully submitted,

**Barbara Gordon,
Executive Director**