

THE BIVALVE BULLETIN

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A New Look...

In case you didn't notice, this newsletter has a new look. Previously published as the *Shellfish Aquaculture Newsletter*, *The Bivalve Bulletin* still intends to provide information on new issues, concerns, and trends at the local, state, and national level to the molluscan shellfish aquaculture industry in Florida. Another addition to the Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Program is a new biologist. Rebecca Varner comes to this position from LAKEWATCH, a citizen volunteer, water quality monitoring program. Rebecca provides support to the extension program at Cedar Key and will assist in implementing a rapid access network for phytoplankton identification this year.

GLOBAL COMPETITION: The World is Your Clam?

Imported seafood accounts for over 70% of the nation's supply. At the same time, the U.S. exported \$3.1 billion of fisheries products in 2001. Nonetheless, seafood represents a significant trade imbalance. Without imports, the U.S. would not have a viable seafood industry. However, burgeoning imports of less-expensive Asian products have recently presented threats to productive, domestic industries. For example, imports of cheaper Chinese crawfish are pushing prices of Louisiana crawfish down and putting harvesters and processors out of work. The most visible case is fish imports from Vietnam targeted to compete with U.S. farm-raised catfish. Concerns over basa and tra frozen fillets include mislabeling and unfair prices. In the past year, the Catfish Farmers of America brought their concerns to the International Trade Commission, which looks at the impact of imports, and to the U.S. Department of Commerce, which investigates whether imports are priced fairly in relation to their production costs. The industry is currently proceeding with an antidumping case against Vietnam seeking high tariffs on imports as well as quotas.

The National Aquaculture Association has also joined the argument against foreign aquacultured products targeting broader issues, such as inferior quality of Asian imports, lack of water quality monitoring and HACCP in processing, and the inadequacies of U.S. inspections on imported products.

The shellfish culture industry is not prepared to compete with large volumes of Asian clams. Some industry observers contend that U.S. companies have already lost significant sales in New York and other states to frozen Vietnamese product. It has been reported that these clams are sold as 200-count bags, weighing 20 pounds, and delivered for 12 cents apiece. Yet, Vietnam is not in the Food and Drug Administration's list of certified shellfish suppliers. Currently, the U.S. only allows Canada, New Zealand, and Chile to import molluscan products. The federal regulatory definition of molluscs includes both fresh and frozen product forms. Freezing alone does not generally eliminate food-borne pathogens. Consequently, Vietnam should only be allowed to ship cooked clams into the U.S. Furthermore, the FDA strictly defines cooking. About 2 years ago, supposedly "cooked" clams from China entered the country. This product was merely heated enough to shuck them, resulting in several reports of illnesses. The newly-formed East Coast Shellfish Growers Association is encouraging anyone to obtain a copy of some sort of documentation (invoices, receipts, and tags, if any) that would prove Vietnamese frozen clams are in the U.S. marketplace so that regulatory action can be initiated.

As a counter point, a recently released seafood industry report scoffed at the notion of protectionism. The report questions with higher labor and capital costs and more stringent regulations, will U.S. producers be able to compete with imports? Rather, the report advises that U.S. producers will need to be more technically efficient, make quality paramount, and learn how to market their product.

(Sources: *SeaFood Business Magazine*; *The Catfish Journal*; 2002 Annual Report on the United States Seafood Industry, H.M. Johnson & Associates, Jacksonville, Oregon; East Coast Shellfish Growers Association Web Site, <http://gseacademic.harvard.edu>)

CLAM GROWERS FORUM REPORT

So what do catfish, strawberries, and fancy swordtails all have in common? Each have effective growers organizations that provide support to their industry through marketing and promotional efforts, research and educational programs. Representatives from each of these commodity groups met with clam growers last November in Tampa to share information on the challenges of starting a successful organization. Here is a summary of what was presented as well as recommendations made by these groups to the Florida clam aquaculture industry.

The Catfish Farmers of America

Mike McCall, Editor *The Catfish Journal*



Catfish is the largest aquaculture industry in the U.S. Formed in 1968, the Catfish Farmers of America (CFA) represents about 900 members in 7 states. A \$40 membership fee is charged. To further fund the organization, the CFA looked to the lowest (in terms of numbers), common denominator - the feed mills. A voluntary program was established, with no oversight, in which a tax of \$6 is applied per ton of feed. This generates a \$4 million annual budget for advertising and public relations. During the 1990s, the CFA formed The Catfish Institute (TCI), which serves as their marketing arm. Initial campaigns were aimed at promoting "USA Farm-Raised." Today, the catfish industry is facing their lowest prices in 15 years. TCI is now focused on new programs, such as introduction of catfish to food organizations, culinary institutes, and schools. The CFA has also hired an advertising agency for public relations, primarily focusing on publications. With overwhelming help from congress and federal legislation, the CFA has facilitated interstate commerce. Other key benefits provided by the organization include their monthly publication, *The Catfish Journal*, and annual trade shows.

Recommendations: Form an organization that will focus on Florida clam growers, who can promote "Florida Clams" to the rest of the U.S. and other countries.



This forum was sponsored by the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA).

Florida Strawberry Growers Association

Chip Hinton, Executive Director



This group tried twice to organize growers prior to achieving success. The Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA) started out in 1982 with \$11,000 from a previous organization. Today, 130 members, representing 90% of the state's growers, pay an assessment of 2 cents per flat at the packaging plant to fund their organization. In turn, the handlers, or buyers, match 2 cents per flat. However, the assessment provides only 25% of the FSGA's income. In the late 1980s, the FSGA sought a federal market order for research and promotional efforts. The industry's biggest problem was the lack of plant varieties specifically developed for Florida. Today, over two-thirds of the cultivars used are of Florida origin. Further, the FSGA administers the Florida Strawberry Patent Service, which holds a licensing agreement to market these varieties and to collect royalties. The industry's increase in value from \$38 million in 1985 to \$175 million today is attributed to the FSGA's aggressive and comprehensive marketing campaign. Their motto "making a commodity a community" reflects the association's additional member services, such as funding for migrant housing, Greenbelt issues, property rights, environmental regulations, credit card program, worker's comp program, youth scholarship program, and socials.

Recommendations: Identify priorities and set 30% of association profit to marketing and research goals. Develop programs that are identifiable. Invest in educational and promotional programs at trade shows, festivals, state fairs, and publications. Target research and promote legislation aimed at problems in clam production. Finally, create a strong volunteer base.

Florida Tropical Fish Farmers Association

David Boozer, Executive Director



In 1964, tropical fish farmers in the state established a purchasing cooperative (non-profit) to make supplies available to members. However, poor management resulted in financial failure. The co-op store was restructured in the mid-1970s as a for-profit corporation, resulting in the formation of the Florida Tropical Fish Farmers Association (FTFFA). Today, over 170 members pay association dues of \$75 per year, which includes a stock certificate. Profits from the FTFFA store also fund research. In addition, royalties from fish shipping boxes go to administration, marketing, and research. The association hosts an annual trade show at which over 700 species of ornamental fish are judged for size, color, and commercial appeal. These shows have been successful in promoting "locally grown" fish, which are healthier and harder than imports.

Recommendations: Need common issues to organize clam growers. Further, the organization must exercise persistence and selectivity when identifying important industry issues to pursue. Then, the key to industry involvement is finding a specific niche to generate funds for addressing these causes.

The Clam Growers Forum allowed participants an opportunity to meet and discuss ongoing development of local clam growers associations. This forum was the first in a series of educational workshops to introduce clam growers to successful agricultural industry organizations. Funding from the USDA-RMA through their Targeted Commodity Partnerships Program, will be used to conduct an assessment of these organizations, characterizing their structures, and identifying strategies to provide resources needed to solve common industry problems.

2003 Clam Seed Suppliers

These hatchery and nursery operations are supplying hard clam, *Mercenaria mercenaria*, seed to Florida growers this year. Contact these suppliers for information on seed sizes, price, color variations, and availability.

Atlantis Clam Farm - H, N

Merritt Island, FL
Contact: Barry Moore
(321) 453-2685
clamsix@aol.com

Bay Shellfish Co. - H, N

Palmetto, FL
Contact: Curt Hemmel
(941) 721-3887 or 722-1346 (Fax)
bayshellfish@earthlink.net

Brewer's Clams - H, N

Cocoa, FL
Contact: Gray Brewer
(321) 632-4920

The Clam Bed - H, N

Wabasso, FL
Contact: Bill Thompson
(772) 589-6138

Cedar Creek Shellfish Farms - N

New Smyrna Beach, FL
Contact: Mike Sullivan
(386) 426-0113 or 847-3202 (cell)
tcssupport@ucnsb.net

Cedar Key Raceways - N

Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Jim Hoy
(352) 543-6970

Clams R' Us - N

Vero Beach, FL
Contact: Joe Weissman
(772) 538-1051

Cole's Clam Nursery - N

Placida, FL
Contact: Dot Cole
(941) 697-3181

First Choice Clam Seed - N

Titusville, FL
Contact: Greg Nelson
(321) 267-1667
(321) 383-1324 (after 7PM)

David Grudin - N

Jensen Beach, FL
Contact: David Grudin
(352) 250-0667
dgrud@yahoo.com

Harbor Branch Clams - H, N

Fort Pierce, FL
Contact: Joe Weisman
(772) 538-1051
or) Richard Baptiste
(772) 465-2400, ext. 414
baptiste@hboi.edu
or) Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Everette Quesenberry
(352) 543-6434

Hydrosphere Research - H

Gainesville, FL
Contact: Craig Watts
(352) 375-9004
pmeyer@hydrosphere.net

Journey's End - N

Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Russell Fulmer
(352) 543-8034

Matt's Clams - N

Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Matt Kennedy
(321) 724-8712 or 266-3704 (cell)

Orchid Island Shellfish Co. - N

Sebastian, FL
Contact: Ed Mangano
(772) 589-1600
or) Kevin Soderberg
(321) 508-6200
ksoderberg@cfl.rr.com

Pelican Inlet Aquafarms -H, N

Cape Coral, FL
Contact: Edwin Connery
(888) SAY- CLAM
(941) 283-2002
highimage@aol.com

R & I Mariculture - H, N

Mims, FL
Contact: Jed Illig
(321) 267-1716
raniclams@yahoo.com

Research Aquaculture - H, N

Jupiter, FL
Contact: Tom McCrudden
(772) 225-0868
raiclams@hotmail.com

Rol-Nik- H, N

Grant, FL
Contact: Nick Hill
(321) 795-1038

Santa Fe Mariculture - H, N

Sebastian, FL
Contact: David Clowdus
(321) 733-5503

SeaPerfect - H, N

Charleston, SC
Contact: Knox Grant
(800) 728-0099
knoxgrant@seaperfect.com
or) Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Laura Adams
(352) 215-9995

Southern Cross Seafarms - H, N

Merritt Island, FL
Contact: Bill Leeming
(321) 459-1022
or) Cedar Key, FL
Contact: David Grudin
(352) 543-5980

Stapleton Development - N

Palmetto, FL
Contact: Mike Taylor
(941) 729-4878
kidmopar@gpe.net

H-Hatchery N-Nursery

2003 Clam Bag Suppliers

The Bag Lady

Suwannee, FL
Contact: Carole Johnsen
(352) 542-8183

Cutthroat Clams

St. James City, FL
Contact: Tammie Heeb
(866) PLUNDER
(239) 283-5800
www.cutthroatclams.com

Dorann Dixon

Placida, FL
Contact: Dorann
(941) 697-1835

Island Bags

Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Carla and Ray Ermel
(352) 543-5231
ilbags@atlantic.net

M and R Seafood

Cedar Key, FL
Contact: Rick Viele
(352) 543-9395
osprefr@att.net

Playing Hooky Enterprises

Alligator Point, FL
Contact: Ed Bradley
(850) 349-2854
caped@clambags.com
www.clambags.com

Quality Clam Bags

Chiefland, FL
Contact: Tracie Hathcox
Drummond
(352) 493-9684

Fabric / Thread Suppliers:

Bayeux Fabrics

Spartanburg, SC
Contact: Tom Howell
(800) 446-9611

Fablok Mills

Murray Hill, NJ
Contact: Sylvia or Sally
(908) 464-1950

Jason Mills, Inc.

Westwood, NJ
Contact: Tom Cosgriff, Jr.
(201) 358-6500

Middleburg Thread & Sewing Supply

Warminster, PA
Contact: David Weitz
(251) 441-9300

C.L.A.M. Computer Logbook And Management

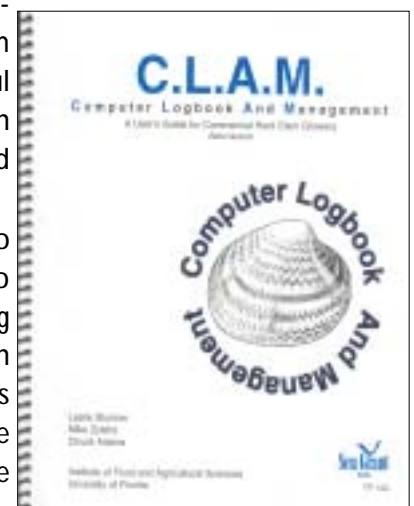
Software Package (Beta Version) and User's Guide



This user-friendly software program, based on Microsoft Excel, is available for IBM-compatible PC systems. The companion User's Guide provides an easy-to-follow explanation of how to use the software package as a tool to enhance record keeping and inventory management for a commercial clam culture operation. The software is composed of various modules, or worksheets, that allow a grower to track clams from the original seed purchase, through nursery and growout planting, to final harvest. The software also provides the grower with the ability to account for operating expenses and capital purchases. In addition, a map feature provides the user with a means to maintain up-to-date visual representation of the location of clam

plantings on the lease site. The information provided by the software will be useful for day-to-day business management decisions, periodic loan application information requirements, and the documentation of changes in inventory that may be needed for crop insurance and other crop assistance programs.

The **C.L.A.M.** software program is initially being released as a Beta Version. To acquire a FREE copy of the package, interested growers are being asked to participate in a training session. Sessions will be scheduled in Levy County during February, in Dixie County during March, in Franklin County during April, in Charlotte and Lee Counties during May, and in Brevard and Indian River Counties during June. This will allow ample time for growers to test and evaluate the software prior to final release. Contact the Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Office for more information on these training sessions.




**MAKE YOUR FARM COUNT:
2002 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE**

The first national census of aquaculture was conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1998. Survey results revealed that molluscs (oysters, clams, mussels) accounted for \$89 million in sales, making shellfish the second highest valued aquacultured product sold by category in the nation. Clam production, including hard and manila, was valued at \$50 million. By state, Florida ranked first in U.S. production of hard clams (76 million), followed by Virginia (70 million), and New Jersey (9 million). However, in terms of value of sales, Florida was second with \$9.5 million reported, trailing Virginia sales of \$11 million.

This year the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service is requesting aquaculturists to participate in the 2002 census of agriculture. Clam growers should have received a report form in the mail. Questions focus on obtaining key information such as acreage used, crop production, product sales, and operator characteristics. Data provided by individual growers will be held strictly confidential by law and will be published only in geographical summaries. The census of agriculture is an important tool for assessing trends and determining current needs of growers. Congress, as well as state and local governments, use the census to evaluate and propose policies and develop farm programs to protect and promote U.S. agriculture. Further, legislators and researchers use state and county-level data to define problem areas and help growers recover from specific problems.

So return your report by **February 3!** It's actually the law. The report should take about 5 minutes to complete. If you did not receive a form, call 1-888-4AG-STAT to make your farm count.

NEW DACS AQUACULTURE POSITIONS

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service (DACS) recently established two new positions to provide technical assistance and support to the shellfish aquaculture industry.

Division of Animal Industry An aquatic veterinary position was developed to serve as a liaison between industry, researchers, and government. Duties may include the reporting of disease outbreaks for specific diseases or pathogens or unusual events, sources of professional assistance from qualified veterinarians, input to national and state aquatic animal health policy issues, and the development and release of notices, fact sheets and other information. Dr. Denise Petty, D.V.M. comes to this position from the ornamental fish industry where she was a staff veterinarian for a wholesale facility for over six years. Stationed at the DACS office in Bartow, Dr. Petty can be reached by phone at (863) 519-8663 or by E-mail at pettyb@doacs.state.fl.us.

Office of Agriculture Law Enforcement After a 2000-01 pilot program investigating clam thefts in Florida, the DACS has committed a unique position specific to clam aquaculture. Although Investigator Dianna Ullery has been assigned to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Field Lab in Cedar Key, her position is responsible for law enforcement in all counties in the state that produce farm-raised shellfish. Investigator Ullery will implement compliance with the federal and state shellfish regulatory guidelines pertaining to harvesting, processing, and distribution. Eventually, Investigator Ullery's office will acquire a boat to implement compliance on state leases. Dianna is available for questions regarding regulations and can be contacted at (352) 453-0615. This direct line can also be used to anonymously report any

UPDATE ON DACS ISSUES

Lease Contract Renewals The instrument, or contract, between a clam grower and the State of Florida, allowing for the leasing of submerged lands for culture, is valid for a period of 10 years. The lease term is effective from the original execution, or signing, of the lease by the State. During 2003, close to 200 shellfish aquaculture leases will terminate. One of the contractual provisions states that the lease can be renewed for an additional 10-year term upon the request of the leaseholder. It further states that the renewal request must be made in writing no later than 30 days prior to the expiration date of the initial contract. Due to the large number of renewals this year, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service (DACS), Division of Aquaculture will mail out notices to affected leaseholders. The notification will inform one on how to complete the renewal process, including the legal documentation and forms. To report a change in mailing address or for more information, contact Ms. Wanda Prentis with the DACS Division of Aquaculture at (850) 488-4033.

Pilot Program for Shore-based Washing Facilities On January 14, representatives from the DACS Division of Aquaculture met with clam industry members in Cedar Key to discuss a pilot program for washing clams at a shore-based, certified aquaculture facility. Under review were the criteria for participating in the program, the aquaculture certification program, and the best management practices (BMPs) prescribed in the program for designing and operating the facility. Under the pilot program, washing activities will become an extension of the harvesting process. The rationale, or need, for this program was outlined in the October 2002 issue of the *Shellfish Aquaculture* Newsletter. During the evening's meeting, clarification of the criteria that harvesters must follow in order to transport washed shellstock to a certified shellfish dealer met with controversy. Based on public health considerations, the washed product must be delivered *immediately*. According to DACS, transportation time and distance are limited for the harvester. Before the pilot program can be implemented in Levy and Dixie Counties, approval must be obtained from the DACS. If you are interested in participating in this program, contact Mark Berrigan with the DACS Division of Aquaculture at (850) 488-4033 or the Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Office.

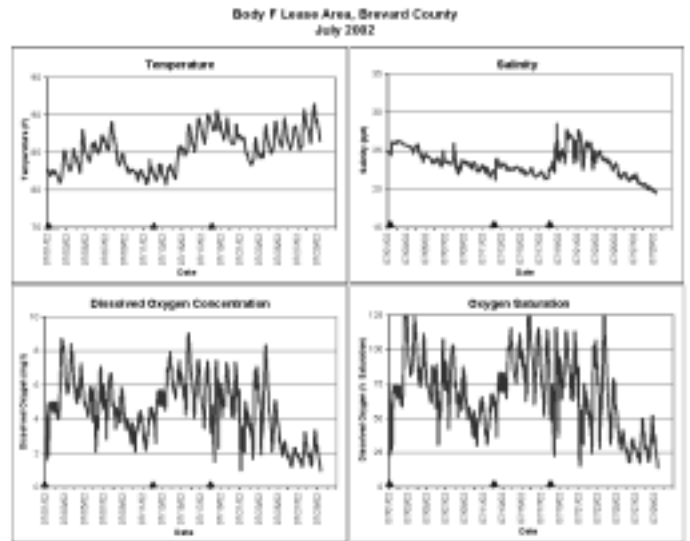
CLAMMRS Data Available

Just last year an ambitious project was initiated to bring important water quality information to clam farmers. During 2002, equipment was installed at 9 stations in 6 clam-producing counties; procedures for maintenance and calibration of the monitoring probes were developed by the DACS Division of Aquaculture staff; and, a web site to display the collected data was setup. Unforeseen problems, such as equipment malfunctions and extreme probe fouling, have caused delays to the CLAMMRS Project.

Currently, "real-time" data collected at selected stations is available at www.FloridaAquaculture.com. In the near future, archived data from battery-operated stations, as well as data gathered during 2002 for all stations, will be electronically posted to this site. Data is not archived until it is proofed by UF faculty using quality assurance procedures similarly developed by the National Estuarine Research Reserves. Basically, measured data is corrected for errors associated with equipment failure, biofouling, or other problems. This ensures the data is not misinterpreted so that management decisions are based on sound information.

Another source of CLAMMRS archived data is the Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Office. Monthly data for 2002, displayed in graphic form, is now available for monitoring stations located at the following lease areas: Gulf Jackson (Levy County), Horseshoe Beach and Pine Island (Dixie

County), Body A and Body F (Brevard County), and Indian River (Indian River County). There is no data available yet for Charlotte and Lee Counties. A "real-time" data logger was deployed at the North Pine Island lease in the latter county just this month. Also available from the extension office is a review of the water quality parameters being measured and their implications on clam production.



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