Chef's Event Launches Cape Cod and Islands Cultured Shellfish Marketing Campaign

"It was a chance to experience the best from the Napa Valley of Shellfish," noted Bill Walton, technical Coordinator for SEMAC, as he described the Chef's Event held Sept. 27th at the Dan'l Webster Inn, in Sandwich. The evening event at the Inn, funded through the Southeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center, was the result of previous marketing research work conducted by the Center for Business Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. These prior studies indicated that two-thirds of shellfish are consumed in restaurants; yet only 32% of restaurants currently purchase farm raised shellfish. Based on this information, it was recommended that the shellfish growers create a brand image complete with a slogan and logo, and pursue the New England restaurant market.

Chef's and buyers, attending the event at the Daniel Webster Inn, toasted shellfish from areas throughout the Cape Cod and Islands Region.

SEMAC, once again contracted Dr. Nora Barnes, Director of the Center for Business Research at UMASS Dartmouth to head up the first phase of the marketing initiative. The September event was the premiere of the new Cape Cod and the Islands logo and slogan, and provided chefs and buyers the opportunity to taste the distinctive differences among shellfish grown in the cold, clear waters of Cape Cod and the Islands. Seventy guests representing restaurants and seafood wholesalers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island attended and sampled oysters and littlenecks provided by the local growers. The growers worked four stations in the elegantly decorated room, shocking product from Barnstable, Brewster, Chatham, Cuttyhunk, Duxbury, Eastham, Gay Head, Orleans, and Wellfleet.

Best Management Practices for the Shellfish Culture Industry Completed

After more than three years in the drafting, the document titled: "Best Management Practices for the Shellfish Industry in Southeastern Massachusetts" is now complete. "BMPs are a set of voluntary procedures that have been developed by the Massachusetts shellfish aquaculture industry in collaboration with SEMAC to address areas where attention should be focused to improve production while preserving the environment." With assistance from the USDA Risk Management Agency, this document will be sent to all licensed shellfish growers in Massachusetts, Boards of Selectmen, Conservation Commissions and Shellfish/Natural Resource Departments of all coastal Communities, and to counties in the states of Florida, South Carolina and Virginia where, similar to Massachusetts, clam crop insurance programs are underway. Finally, beyond the benefits of better management for shellfish culture operations, additional incentive programs are under development. On November 04 a request for

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2004 Grant Program Update

As in previous years, SEMAC provided funding in the FY 04 budget for an Aquaculture Industry Support Program. The program was originally established in 1998 to meet the particular situations and needs of local aquaculturists with the objective to support sustainable aquaculture development, promotion, and diversification. This past season, the SEMAC board approved $35,000.00 for the grant program, and directed that at least $20,000.00 of these funds be used for marketing projects that promoted cultured shellfish. The SEMAC funding was bolstered by another $50,000.00, when the center agreed to administer monies provided through the Dept. of Agricultural Resources for industry support. The state-wide open solicitation began in February, and projects were chosen over the next months until the funds were finally exhausted in late May. The $85,000.00 funded 15 projects, and generated an industry match of $289,000.00. Final reports on these projects will be due the end of December, and presentations on the projects will be given at a future annual industry summit.

A list of funded projects is on Page 4

BMPs Complete...from page 1

assistance through proposals from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (AEEP) will solicit proposals relevant to the implementation of specific activities associated with the BMP publication. DAR is also working with USDA National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff to examine opportunities for assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that could provide incentive payments and/or cost sharing opportunities for Massachusetts shellfish growers who intend to implement BMPs.

BMP Document compiled and edited by:
Dale Leavitt, Ph.D., formally the SEMAC technical coordinator, now with Rodger Williams University in Rhode Island.

BMP Subcommittee
Bill Burt, Bill Clark, Lee Davis, Russ DeConti, Joel Fox, Dick Kraus, Dale Leavitt, Henry Lind, Dennis Murley, Diane Murphy, Bob Wallace
Bill Walton added in 2003

BMPs reviewed by the following agencies:
MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources
MA Division of Marine Fisheries
US Environmental Protection Agency
US Army Corp of Engineers
US National Park Service
Association to Preserve Cape Cod
MA Audubon Society
Cape Cod Commission

"Spit and Chatter"

by Bill Burt
In the future, this column titled: "spit and chatter" will provide our growers with an opportunity to provide some insight or advice on a particular issue or topic that may be helpful to other members of the shellfish aquaculture industry. For this first issue, SEMAC wanted to use the grower's column to recognize the efforts of Heidi Gallo of the Massachusetts Aquaculture Association, who for more than ten years has provided the association with countless hours of volunteer service. What better thing to "chatter" about!
Heidi will be stepping down from her position as treasurer, organizer, and "chef cook and bottle washer" of MAA to pursue her artistic endeavors. She has told us she will stay involved with the association, which makes one feel better; but her work ethic will be sorely missed. It is now time for others in MAA to step forward and continue with her efforts. The staff at SEMAC truly enjoyed working with Heidi, and we wish her the best of luck with her art career!
We will be seeking out growers to write for this column, but if you would like to contribute to "spit and chatter", simply email your short piece 175-300 words to wburf@umext.umass.edu, or mail a hard copy to SEMAC, c/o Bill Burt, PO Box 367, Barnstable, MA 02630
Establishment of Shellfish Research Farms 2005 Priority

Shellfish growers may well become research associates during the 2005 summer season. SEMAC is hoping to establish a regional network of shellfish farmers all conducting the same tests at the same time with the same gear. Dr. Bill Walton, the aquaculture specialist and technical coordinator for SEMAC programming, introduced the innovative concept this past spring, and at a meeting in October the board of directors approved the plan, and allocated $25,000.00 to fund the project. The main intent of the program is to get high quality, applied research done for the benefit of the cultured shellfish industry. Based on feedback from growers, however, it’s important that the research be conducted locally and preferably with hands-on participation by industry members.

Over the winter, the SEMAC board will work with Walton to develop a research agenda, identifying topics of interest to the industry. Topics being considered currently include testing the effects of density on oyster susceptibility to disease, pilot soft shell clam trials, and comparison of quahog growth. Once these research priorities are set, growers interested in participating will be selected using an open solicitation and review process, with the goal of broad geographic representation.

Participating growers will be expected to maintain the experiments and allow SEMAC personnel to collect the data, while SEMAC will provide the seed, gear, methods, and a stipend for the grower’s time. In this way, shellfish farms around the region will be working together to get valuable information that improves sustainability and profitability. Walton said, “There are a lot of questions that are important to answer. By working together, we can start to get answers, one by one.”

Survey results also showed that eighty-two percent (82%) thought the logo was excellent, seventy-one percent (71%) were now inclined to purchase farm raised product, and most attendees wanted more information about the product and its availability. “

Guests at the event received a gift bag containing promotional items, all of which displayed the new logo created for the marketing campaign. Included among the gifts were an embossed shucking knife, an apron, a calendar featuring grower photos, menu stickers, and recipes. The exit survey of attendees indicated that the evening was very well received. Ninety-three percent (93%) of the chefs and buyers found the event to be very helpful, and they welcomed the opportunity to meet the growers, and sample their product. Survey results also showed that eighty-two percent (82%) thought the logo was excellent, and seventy-one percent (71%) were now inclined to purchase farm raised product, and attendees wanted more information about the product and its availability.

At her presentation to the board of directors in October, Dr. Barnes stressed the importance of continuing with the momentum derived from the Chef’s event and had three major recommendations for continuing marketing efforts:
1. Make more written information available.
2. Address the issue of a web site.
3. Hold a similar event in the spring, preferably at a venue in the interior or western part of the state.

SEMAC staff intends to work with MAA and State Aquaculture Coordinator, Scott Soares over the next several months to move forward with the recommended strategy.
Announcing a new, continuing workshop series, developed and offered by a consortium of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution Sea Grant, Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, the Southeastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and the Massachusetts Coastal Training Program

Improving Shellfish Aquaculture Production

This series, developed in response to the needs expressed by Massachusetts shellfish farmers in a recent industry survey, seeks to improve shellfish aquaculture production by decreasing losses, improving growth, maximizing profitability and encouraging environmentally sustainable practices. Although open to the general public, these workshops are meant to be most useful to individuals who are raising shellfish - either for profit or restoration. The workshops will focus on applied, practical information that is useful to shellfish farmers in the field.

Coming in 2005
Look for Announcements of Specific Dates

Management of Predators: Predation is routinely cited by shellfish aquaculturists as a major concern and an ongoing threat to their profitability. Despite their awareness of predation as a problem, shellfish growers are in need of more information about how to manage predators and limit their losses to predation. This workshop will feature growers talking about how they've recognized and dealt with particular predators, comparison of specific techniques, and distribution of identification guides of common predators.

Management of Pests: Pests, such as blue mussels, barnacles and algae, seriously affect shellfish farmers, from making their work unpleasant to the extreme of loss of their shellfish crop. Often shellfish farmers aren't aware of pests until the problem is a major problem. This workshop will include growers discussing how they've dealt with pest issues, a presentation of various pro-active methods to limit pests, and distribution of identification guides of common pests.

Disease Recognition and Management: Although shellfish farmers know that diseases can inflict significant mortality on their shellfish crop, there's a need to both 1) recognize the first signs of the disease in the field and 2) consider crop management techniques that reduce the spread and effects of disease. This workshop will include growers talking about their experiences with shellfish disease, a hands-on demonstration of recognition of diseased shellfish, presentations of recommended best management practices, and distribution of identification guides of signs of various shellfish diseases.

2004 funded project list...from page 2

Request for Cultured Shellfish Marketing Proposals Now Open

See www.capecodextension.org/semac/

Upcoming Events

December 2-4
Northeast Aquaculture Conference & Exposition, Radisson Hotel, Manchester, NH
Information - J.J. Newman-Rode, 603-749-1565, jjenewman@jumnh.edu

December 3-4
Bay Scallops Restoration Workshop at NACE, Radisson Hotel, Manchester, NH
Information—Bill Walton (508) 375-6849 wwalton@whoi.edu

December 10 Noon to 4 PM
MAA Annual Meeting, Courtyard Marriott, 707 Route 132, Hyannis, MA
January 17-20
Aquatilure America 2005, Marriott New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

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(508) 830-6478

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Offices are located at Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, Deeds and Probate Building, Barnstable Village, the County Farmhouse, Rt. 6A Barnstable and at the Captain Charles Harley Library of the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.