Marketing Cape Cod and Islands Cultured Shellfish
Boston Seafood Show, New England Food Service and Lodging Expo, and Chefs’ Event highlight region’s high quality product.

Winter and early spring may be the slow season for some shellfish farmers, but not for the growers from the Cape Cod and Islands’ region. Over the last several months, growers volunteered both time and product, and worked the shucking trays to promote the region’s high quality cultured shellfish at the International Boston Seafood Show, the New England Food Service and Lodging Exposition, and a very special chefs’ event at the Castle Restaurant in Leicester, MA. The Seafood show in Boston, held March 13th thru the 15th, drew more than 15,000 visitors and people from over 80 countries. “IBSS is North America’s premier seafood event where international buyers, suppliers, distributors/wholesalers, importers, exporters, brokers and traders annually gather to launch and source new products, identify niche markets, connect with customers, evaluate industry trends and learn about the latest in seafood technology and products.” To that end, Massachusetts had a 400 sq. ft. “pavilion” of what many participants suggested was the finest shellfish that they had ever sampled! Exhibiting companies that elected to participate in this years show included Barnstable Seafoods, Billingsgate Shellfish, Cotuit Oyster Farms, Finn Farms, Great Marsh Seafoods, Island Creek Oyster Farms, Target Ship Oyster Farm, Wash-a-Shore Oyster Ranch, and the Wellfleet Shellfish Co. The 2005 IBSS also featured a new venue, being held for the first time at the new Boston Convention and Exhibition Cent (BCEC), which boasts easy access, 62 loading docks and an exhibit space large enough to host the 900+ exhibitors all on one floor! Although not with the same level of participation, trips to Boston continued with an effort to market cultured product at the New England Food Service and Lodging Exposition April 10th thru the 12th. The Expo was also held at the new convention center. While this event gave our growers access to over 10,000 thousand buyers from the New England Foodservice Market, the interest from growers was not as strong for this venue. This may have been due to the short time span between the Seafood Show and the Expo, but regardless, thanks to Barnstable Seafoods, Billingsgate Shellfish, Finn Farms, Great Marsh Seafoods, Wampanoag Aquinnah Shellfish, Target Ship Oysters and the Wellfleet Shellfish Co., Massachusetts farm raised shellfish was represented at the show which, as usual, “wowed!” the crowd as a result of the exceptional quality of the featured products. Two events so close together may not make both venues possible next year, but according to Scott Soares, MA Aquaculture Coordinator, planning for the 2006 Seafood Show to be held March 12th thru the 14th is already underway. Growers interested in having space, or who would like to have “VIP” passes for the show, should contact Scott at (617) 626-1730.

Chefs’ Event Provides Grand Finale to Spring Marketing Campaign
April 25th, Leicester, MA
As you crossed the moat and opened the large front doors, you immediately knew this was not your ordinary restaurant. When greeted by the owner, Dr. Stanley Nicas, you knew this was not going to be an ordinary evening. The highly regarded Castle Restaurant located in Leicester and owned by the Nicas family for more than 56 years, hosted a Chefs’ Event.

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SEMAC's Photo Journal Project

Have you seen the recent photo-documentary of Cape Cod & Islands shellfish farms done by Chris Linder? As part of a project by SEMAC to convey the story of the region's shellfish farming industry, Chris has been tagging along with various shellfish farmers. SEMAC plans to use the photographs at meetings and various public displays.

How does it work? Working from a checklist of species and activities SEMAC wants documented, Chris will choose candidates from the volunteer list and contact these individuals to see if a visit can be arranged. Chris is well aware of the demands of shellfish farming and does an excellent job of working in the background; you just need to do what you normally do out there (no posing required!). Afterwards, volunteers will get digital copies of the images for their own personal use. Now we're looking for more volunteers! If you're interested, please contact Bill Walton with your name, farm location and species you are raising. To see more of Chris' work, you can also visit his web site at: www.christinder.com/portfolio_semac.html

Growers and all who are involved in the industry must recognize that NRAC remains focused on its mission... “to develop and sponsor cooperative regional research and extension projects in support of the aquaculture industry in the entire northeastern United States.”

What will NRAC’s move mean to the Industry in Massachusetts?

My view...by Bill Bart
The Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center located at UMass Dartmouth is headed south to the University of Maryland. Established in 1987, and funded through USDA, NRAC is one of five regional centers set up to promote and assist the aquaculture industry in the United States. NRAC serves the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. What this move will mean to our industry in Massachusetts remains to be seen, but an article in the Jan/Feb edition of Fish Farming News raises questions about future changes. Dr. Tom Jamir, who has served as the NRAC Director, and will step down from that position, stated in the article that “the proposal for NRAC at the University of Maryland appeared to offer a plan to overhaul the entire system,” and that the industry and research community were ‘quite apprehensive’ about what might occur.” Growers here in Massachusetts and from throughout the more northern states of the region need to keep a sharp eye on funding and research priorities; as it appears, this more southern site of the center could result in dollars being spent on localized projects and problems. Growers and all who are involved in the industry must recognize that NRAC remains focused on its mission... “to develop and sponsor cooperative regional research and extension projects in support of the aquaculture industry in the entire northeastern United States.

Research Farms Selected for 2005 Field Season

By way of Bill Walton
Field research shellfish farms will soon be established in eight locations across the region: Wellfleet Harbor, Barnstable Harbor, Duxbury Bay, the Cape Cod Bay Flats, Pleasant Bay, Cape Cod’s South Shore, Buzzards Bay, and Martha’s Vineyard. These farms will be used to investigate a variety of research questions, and growers will work on the following general research plan and tasks:

Determine Effects of Density on Oyster Growth and Survival
This experiment will measure differences in survival and growth over a range of 5 stocking densities to determine the optimum density.

Using periwinkles to limit fouling
In this experiment, participants will add fixed numbers of periwinkles to their bags of oysters to see if the grazing snails improve survival and/or growth.

Effect of planting density on quahogs:
Participants will plant quahogs at several densities, determining the optimum planting densities for clams.

Trying triploid oysters
On the US west coast, triploid (sterile) oysters are widely used, due to improved growth and conditioning. This experiment will test native triploids against our typical (diploid) oysters, in terms of growth and survival.

Growers chosen this year include:

Irving Puffer-Welfleet Harbor
David Slack - Pleasant Bay
John Lowell - Cape Cod Bay Flats
Carl Syriata - Barnstable Harbor
Mike Dunbar - Cape’s Southside
Gregg Morris - Duxbury Bay
Keith Mann - Buzzards Bay
Rob Garrison - Martha’s Vineyard

The program will begin in June with an organizational meeting of all the network participants.

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event promoting Cape Cod and Islands Cultured Shellfish. This event, held in Western Massachusetts, was part of the ongoing marketing strategy developed by the Center for Business Research at UMASS Dartmouth, directed by Dr. Nora Ganim Barnes. More than 100 guests representing restaurants and seafood wholesalers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island attended the event. The function room at the Castle Restaurant was beautifully decorated, and attendees had a chance to sample product from the towns and villages of Barnstable Brewster, Chatham, Cotuit, Duxbury, Eastham, Edgartown, Gay Head, Orleans, and Wellfleet. A wine tasting, provided by MS Walker Distributors, added to the elegance of the evening, which also included an informational session on Cape Cod and Islands Cultured Shellfish by Bill Walton, technical coordinator for SEMAC. All the guests received elegant gift bags, and an exit survey was conducted. 84 of the 102 attendees filled out the survey. Dr. Barnes and Ava Lescault presented the results of the exit survey to the SEMAC Board of Directors at their May 12th meeting. Findings were extremely favorable, exemplifying the success of the event. Similar to the Chefs’ Event held last September, respondents to the survey indicated that information regarding the product was very important to them, as was the chance to meet the growers, and sample the variety of product from across the region. When asked to compare Cape and Islands Cultured Product to non Cape product, 92% of the respondents rated Cape and Islands product as superior. Growers will now consider an offer to have another Chefs’ event later this fall at the Catch Restaurant in Winchester, closer to Boston.

“Spit and Chatter”

By Don Liptak, NRCS

USDA Farm Bill Program Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) For Shellfish Growers

The USDA NRCS, working with the Cape Cod Conservation District, MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources, SEMAC, MA Aquaculture Association and Cape Cod Cooperative Extension initiated a new program in 2005 that has great potential to benefit the shellfish aquaculture industry. Entitled The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), provides incentives for environmentally sound management and sustainable practices of shellfish farming; and it requires that growers adhere to the criteria of best management practices set forth in the Best Management Practices Manual for the Shellfish Culture Industry in Southeastern Massachusetts. (SEMAC/MA DAR, 2004). In this pilot project year, $200,000 was allotted for growers. This is a competitive program, and this past spring, 38 farms applied for EQIP assistance with 18 approvals. Applications are scored using an environmental ranking process, which has been in place since 1998, to assess eligible farmers of other commodity groups. The ranking process uses a numerical system of natural resource factors based on the location of the grant and costs. Examples of resources evaluated are threatened and endangered species habitat (Determined by the MA Natural Heritage Program), Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), eelgrass habitat, and public beach proximity. Also, used in the formula is a cost effectiveness value (practice dollars needed per grant acre).

Practices that are eligible for cost share are: buffer establishment, pest management, weather and wildlife record keeping, upgrade to 4 stroke engines, navigation aid standard markings, off-bottom culture gear recycling and plastic gear waste disposal.

We are encouraged with this demonstration year. It is our hope that it will lead to expanded funding next year, and will allow for applicants not approved this round to reapply and become eligible for assistance. Questions about this program should be directed to Don Liptak, NRCS at (508) 771-6476

“Spit and Chatter” is a column for growers to author, but Don’s piece about EQIP provides important information for our industry, so we took the liberty to include it in this section of the newsletter.

Bill Burt

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 practical, applied information that is useful to shellfish farmers in the field. The first in this series focused on the **Management of Predators**, and was held at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in February

**Upcoming in 2005**

**Look for Announcements of Specific Dates**

**Management of Pests:** Pests, such as blue mussels, barnacles and algae, seriously affect shellfish farmers, from making their work unpleasant to the extreme 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.

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### Improving Shellfish Aquaculture Production: Management of Predators

SEMAC was proud to be a part of a collaboration of outreach organizations that put together the workshop entitled, “Improving Shellfish Aquaculture Production: Management of Predators” held last February at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. The workshop, attended by almost 40 growers, and geared towards practical advice useful to working shellfish farmers, was highlighted by presentations by 4 shellfish growers who talked about some of their tips and techniques:

- **Bill Dewey,** Taylor Shellfish Company
  - Samish Bay & Shelton, WA
- **Chip Maran,** Hampton Shellfish Co. Inc.
  - Water Mill, NY
- **Andrew Cummings,** Wash-A-Shore Oyster Ranch
  - Wellfleet, MA
- **Jeff Gardner,** Shellfish For You
  - RI and VA

In addition, several scientists and extension agents contributed to the discussion. While there was no single solution to the problem of managing predators, the afternoon ended with a productive exchange of ideas among the speakers and the growers that attended. **By Bill Walton**

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### Research Farms Continued

Growers will be supplied with the gear and shellfish seed needed to conduct the experiments, and the participants will each be paid a stipend of $2,000 for their time maintaining the sites and recording data. **Walton noted that the Triplot Oyster Experiment is in the plans for 2005, but permitting for the project is still pending at the time of this newsletter publication. A meeting about the issue with DMF will be scheduled in the near future. For further information contact Bill Walton, who will oversee the research farm network.**

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### Upcoming Aquaculture Events

- **May 31-June 3**
  - National Assoc. of State Aquaculture Coordinators
  - Long Branch, NJ. Contact: <joseph.myers@ag.state.nj.us>
  - June 4
    - Aquaculture Legal Developments Workshop
    - National Sea Grant Law Center
    - Rockport, Maine
    - June 16-17
      - Atlantic Aquaculture Exhibition, Conference and Fair
      - St. Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada
      - October 13
        - SEMAC Board Meeting
        - Farmhouse Conference Room, RT 6A, Barnstable

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