

Mariculture Workforce Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

April 14, 2017

Attendees: Paula Cullenberg (Alaska Sea Grant), John Kiser (Rocky Bay Oysters), Eric Wyatt (Blue Starr Oyster), Tomi Marsh (OceansAlaska), Myrna Gardner (Central Council), Kirsten Shelton Walker (McDowell Group) and Reid Brewer (UAS)

Action items:

Paula will include edits to recommendations and circulate notes and latest version of report.

Notes:

The group reviewed the draft recommendations outlined in the draft report developed by Paula. They are:

1. Encourage the hire of an Aquaculture Specialist to finalize training materials, develop and coordinate training opportunities to meet workforce objectives.
2. Finalize modules and skill sets needed for individuals to work on shellfish/seaweed farms using best practices.
3. Develop a hands-on “Introduction to Shellfish/Seaweed Farming” workforce development training program in partnership with Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, Alaska Sea Grant, growers and other partners. Objective is to develop a cohort of skilled farmers who could either work on a farm or eventually start their own farm. Get people trained up
4. Develop a longer term, shellfish/seaweed farmer apprenticeship program.

Recommendation 1 – Encourage the hire of an Aquaculture Specialist to finalize training materials, develop and coordinate training opportunities to meet workforce objectives.

Paula asked, do we want to designate the Aquaculture Specialist a Sea Grant specialist versus a state agency employee or traditional academic faculty member? General consensus is yes, that Sea Grant is the best fit because we are looking for someone who understands the needs of industry and can help direct industry-driven research. Eric noted that linking the specialist with Sea Grant will help enable ongoing Sea Grant aquaculture funding. Reid mentioned that Sea Grant’s link to industry and science is the model and is a better approach than making the position academic. Jim mentioned that a Sea Grant person could focus on helping new farmers getting certified and approved. Eric encouraged a new aquaculture specialist visit all farms and projects right off the bat to get a sense of what is going on and understand lessons learned.

Consensus to keep Sea Grant in the recommendation and to include an aquaculture specialist in the current proposal being developed to National Sea Grant.

Recommendation 2 – Finalize modules and skill sets needed for individuals to work on shellfish/seaweed farms using best practices.

Paula noted that the aquaculture specialist would be tasked with developing these modules and skill sets for training and developing training and professional development program. She also recognized that a lot of materials are available and have been developed by John Kiser, Ray RaLonde already that are available.

Reid noted that, as with salmon enhancement training, credit is not useful. Maybe recommend non-credit. However, John noted that some form of University credential is important. Jim agreed that some type of credential linked to training may help with ease of getting loans and leases. Eric noted that certification without credit is possible, i.e. a credential in how to operate a flupsy could be useful.

Jim discussed the usefulness of online training and the need to make sure classes are compatible with the shellfish farming lifestyle. Tomi talked about the value of remote training classes for professional development while on the farm. Maybe an Introduction to Shellfish Farming for workers. Reid then talked about the use of iPads by the UAS Fisheries Technology Program, allowing for a suite of classes to be taken on an iPad without the need for internet connection. **Consensus to add remote access to coursework to the recommendation as both a professional development and recruitment/retention tool.**

Recommendation 3 - Develop a hands-on “Introduction to Shellfish/Seaweed Farming” workforce development training program in partnership with Central Council of Tlingit and Haida, Alaska Sea Grant, growers and other partners. Objective is to develop a cohort of skilled farmers who could either work on a farm or eventually start their own farm.

Call it an “intensive”. Reid said that they are starting to do intensive training as well with salmon enhancement program. Myrna, divide the intensive into discrete training modules with a set curriculum so that it is compatible with a workforce training program. Include basic skill building such as safety, boat operation, etc. Make sure it takes advantage of the earlier training. Make sure this leads into the next step. Maybe develop a letter of attendance or certificate or something to give people access to programs such as a certification course.

Other recommendations to add to report? Consensus to add - Try and tie in high school kids and give them exposure to this career – join industry career awareness activities – include aquaculture careers. Also, have a succinct evaluation plan and track people into jobs – include workforce in economic impacts and economic analysis and employment.

Paula will add the edits and two new recommendations to the report and will circulate these notes and the draft of the report.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05 am.