

EAST COAST SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION



The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association represents over 1,000 shellfish farmers from Maine to Florida. These proud stewards of the marine environment produce sustainable, farmed shellfish while providing thousands of jobs in rural coastal towns.

The ECSGA informs policy makers and regulators to protect a way of life.

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From the Mouth of the Bay

Celebrating ECSGA's Tenth Anniversary



Executive Director
Bob Rheault

We are proud to announce that 2013 marks the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the ECSGA. To commemorate this auspicious occasion we are trying out some new things and hope you approve. For several years we have been looking for a way to get a paper copy of the newsletter into the hands of every one of our members. Although publishing online was a low-cost way to get the word out, we realized that many of our members don't have computers or are just too busy to read an online publication.

We've entered into an agreement with Compass Publications, publishers of *Fish Farming News*, that will help us get paper copies out to all our members. ECSGA members will also get a free copy of *Fish Farming News* out of the

deal! We will continue to post our newsletter online for those who prefer digital media.

Changes are also afoot with the Listserv. This popular ECSGA service has been growing by leaps and bounds, with new members joining regularly. It's a great way to keep up to date on shellfish issues and news, but probably not the best vehicle for communicating policy options or political strategies to our members. Rather than regulate who can join the Listserv and attempt to moderate what gets posted, we will be subscribing to Constant Contact, a professional email marketing service that will enable us to send out targeted mailings to our grower members. We hope to have this up and running in a few weeks.

As always, I welcome your feedback, comments, criticisms and ideas on how to better disseminate information to our members. We work hard to generate timely and useful information that can keep you well informed, while (hopefully) improving your bottom line.

our delegates about issues such as regulatory relief and import-export inequities.

2013 Walk on the Hill Successful Again

Once again the last week of January saw shellfish industry representatives from all three coasts converging on Washington, D.C., for the annual Walk on the Hill. As is our custom, participants came together for half a day to discuss key issues facing each coast before fanning out to meet with our elected representatives and agency officials. This year the mood turned somber as we were informed that Mike Voisin, leader of the Gulf Oyster Industry Council, had suffered a fatal heart attack just before he was scheduled to leave on the trip to Washington.

Mike would have been proud that despite the absence of his usual inspirational leadership we were able to press on and have a series of good meetings. Washington remains mired in partisan gridlock, but I think we accomplished quite a bit. No one is handing out funds for our much-needed priorities, so we concentrated on educating

Dozens of growers from the three coasts attended a joint meeting of USDA and NOAA officials. Eric Schwaab, Mike Rubino, Max Holtzman, Gary Jensen (and many other agency representatives) got an earful about permitting challenges and research priorities. We voiced support for programs such as Sea Grant, the USDA's Regional Aquaculture Centers, ARS, NIFA, and NRCS and especially the work being done at the NOAA Lab in Milford, Conn.

We were briefed on the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture's new Permitting Task Force being chaired by NOAA's Alan Reisenhoover. Unfortunately, we continue to hear tales where a few individuals in district offices in Army Corps or in NOAA Habitat

2013 Walk on the Hill

Sincere and heartfelt thanks to all who made the Walk on the Hill so successful this year.

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Hill Walkers

Ed and Kathy Rhodes,
Tom Rossi, Ben Goetsch,
Dan Grosse, Mike
Oesterling, Johnny
Shockley, Stephan Abel

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Peter Fu of Grand Central
Oyster Bar

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Johnny Shockley,
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Anthony D'Angelo,
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Photographer

Mike Oesterling

are holding up permits for years. We need to find a way to force permitting agencies to use fact-based determinations so we can remove individual personal agendas from the permit process.

I made the point (as I repeated a dozen times that week) that \$50 million more for stock assessments won't create one new job, but if NOAA invested even a fraction of that in shellfish research and development, we could ensure that shellfish aquaculture could

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The Future Is Bright, But We Have To Seize It

By Sebastian Belle,
Executive Director, Maine Aquaculture Association



Photo —
Passionfish.org

How many times have you looked back on your life and realized that you missed an opportunity? Most of us have done it a few times. All too often those realiza-

tions turn into regrets as we think about what could have been. How do we seize the opportunities we are given and make a difference?

In many ways the history of aquaculture in the U.S. is a series of missed opportunities. Even though the U.S. comprises the second largest seafood market in the world, American farmers produce less than five percent of the seafood consumed here. Countries like Chile, Japan, Norway and Canada have made building their aquaculture sectors a national development priority. The U.S. has never done this for aquaculture, but has done it many times for other domestic economic sectors, including energy production, transportation, agriculture, aerospace and armaments.

Once again, the U.S. stands at a crossroads, with an unusual opportunity before us. In 2010 President Obama issued an executive order establishing a National Ocean Policy for the Stewardship of the Ocean, Coasts and Great Lakes. The president and his staff deserve a great deal of credit and thanks for elevating concerns about our oceans and their ecosystems to a national level. It has been over 43 years since the Stratton Commission issued a similar national assessment and series of policy recommendations.

And yet, nowhere in any of these documents does it state that it is in the national interest to increase domestic aquaculture. In a country where seafood imports contribute over \$10 billion annually to the trade deficit, where millions remain unemployed and where we are grappling with the largest budget deficit in history, this seems unfortunate. While our competitors pour millions of dollars into aquaculture development, we seem incapable of articulating our own national needs.

U.S. commercial fisheries have been flat or declining for the last ten years. Seafood in America is getting much more expensive and will continue to do so. Data from the last census revealed that a record-high 15 percent of U.S. households were classified as “food insecure,” which is the modern, politically correct term for “hungry.”

With the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone encompassing more area than our national land mass, literally hundreds of millions of acres stand available for use to grow food, to generate jobs and to help address our economic challenges. Our nation’s oceans are a truly amazing resource. We should not be afraid to prioritize the responsible use of that resource in the nation’s interest.

So what can we collectively do to avoid having one of those, “If only we had ...” moments sometime in the near future? Those of us in the aquaculture sector now have an unusual opportunity and responsibility. We have a chance to make a difference for the next generation of Americans and immigrants who will need reliable, reasonably priced sources of healthy food on which to build America’s future.

Over the last two years I have engaged in the discussion around the new National Ocean Policy. I spent hours in meetings with folks who championed environmental stewardship, preservation and ocean wildernesses, and I have great respect for their passion, talent and determination.

But rarely have I found a colleague in the room. Rarely have I heard a voice raised by others in the aquaculture field. Often if there is a comment made it is from the research community positioning for funding or from an individual company looking to be the poster child for responsible aquaculture. We need to do better than that. We are being out-spent, out-published, out-lobbied and out-thought by special interest groups who are generously funded by large foundations with preservationist agendas. We are letting opportunity slip through our fingers and future generations will judge us accordingly.

It’s time for members of the aquaculture industry to stand up and be counted. Here’s what you can do:

- Follow the development and implementation of the National Ocean Policy and make a comment at www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans/implementationplan;
- Demand that aquaculture development be included in our National Ocean Policy;
- Demand that sustainable aquaculture be recognized as in our nation’s interest;
- Demand that as the National Ocean Policy is implemented, sustainable aquaculture is prioritized and our nation’s ocean resources are used to feed people and put people to work – they should not be preserved as wildernesses areas that are off limits to responsible development;
- Contact your state and federal representatives and tell them that unless aquaculture is prioritized you support blocking funding for implementation of the National Ocean Policy;
- Contact the National Aquaculture Association (thenaa.net) and tell them to aggressively pursue prioritization of aquaculture in the National Ocean Policy and in each of the regional plans that will be developed to implement that policy; and finally
- Attend a meeting of your Regional Planning Commission, introduce yourself and tell them why aquaculture should be identified as a national priority in the National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan. For more information visit northeastoceancouncil.org.

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Aquaculture and the Jones Act:

Are You Covered?

by David McCaleb
McCaleb-Metzler, Inc.

For at least 20 years our clients who grow clams and oysters have protected their workers and themselves with state-regulated workers' compensation insurance, and have had multiple claims paid this way. However, recent court cases have shown that injured aquaculture workers may have grounds to sue employers in federal court under the Jones Act.

Word has been spreading fast. Already we've heard reports of ambulance-chasing maritime lawyers approaching aquaculture workers directly, even in convenience stores, asking if they have ever been injured on the job. Since these cases are tried in federal courts, legal defense costs of \$50,000 or higher are not uncommon.

The Jones Act is a federal statute regulating maritime commerce in U.S. waters. It has broad implications for the aquaculture industry, but let's focus on how it can apply to injured aquaculture workers.

To sue under the Jones Act, the employee must satisfy two criteria:

1. be a seaman; and
2. have an employee-employer relationship.

Let's tackle the "seaman" issue first. To qualify as a seaman, the employee must work upon a "vessel." Almost all boats, skiffs and barges qualify as vessels. Furthermore, the vessel must work upon the navigable waters of the United States. If you work on tidal waters or further out, that meets the criteria. Finally, the employee must contribute to the function of the vessel (pilot, load, unload, etc.) and have a connection to it that is substantial.

The employee-employer relationship can be complex, with the burden of proof on the employee. The degree of control, amount of supervision, method of payment, and understanding of the relationship all factor into the court's determination. In other words, just because you pay someone by 1099 doesn't mean you don't employ a seaman.

Here is a quick test suitable for most aquaculture businesses: if your employee regularly works on your boats, on tidal waters, for approximately 30 percent or more of the time, then chances are you employ a seaman. If so, it is to your benefit to obtain appropriate

insurance coverage. It's important to understand that workers' compensation will *not* protect you or your employees, or otherwise provide coverage for Jones Act exposure.

Injured seamen are entitled to "maintenance and cure," which is the maritime equivalent of workers' compensation, paying for living and health expenses while

they recover. They can also sue for negligence or unseaworthiness of the vessel and seek to recover unearned wages, transportation and more. Each case stands on its own merit, and there is no cap on damages.

So, how do you plug the Jones Act hole? The short-term solution is to carry both state workers'

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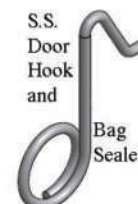
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Best New Product Seen at World Aquaculture 2013 XperCount™ Boon to Hatchery Managers

At first glance the XperCount™ may look like a plain old five-gallon compound bucket with a fancy lid, but it's actually a sophisticated, easy-to-use counting device that works on many different types of small aquatic organisms. Developed by XpertSea Solutions, it boasts a 95-percent accuracy rate on samples ranging from 500 ml to 10 liters, and is durable even when used in marine environments.

Forget hours of looking through a microscope clicking a hand-held tally counter – just pour organisms into the container, press the **count** button, and voila! More accurate than the average graduate student and the job is done in seconds.

“If I had had this device when I

was running my hatchery, I could have saved hundreds of terminally boring hours peering into a microscope,” said ECSGA Executive Director Bob Rheault.

XperCount™ is portable and durable, even when used in marine environments. The cost of the device varies, depending on the number of different types of organisms being counted (up to nine counting applications per device). For example, it can be set up to count shellfish eggs, larvae, spat and microalgae for about \$5,000.

For more information about the XperCount™ and how it can be integrated into various hatchery operations, visit www.xpertsea.com.



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Meet the New President Daniel T. Grosse

A few decades ago, when I first visited Napa Valley wineries, I loved not only the wines (well, some more than others), but also the attitudes of the winemakers. Beyond a desire to sell their own wines, they also recommended good wines from their competitors. Promoting Napa wines collectively benefitted all Napa wine-makers.

Fast forward to an event I attended a few months ago with several other growers, shucking our oysters for a large crowd. More than competitors, we were colleagues. The event was fun, the weather perfect. We sang the praises of each others' oysters. And in the process, we were promoting high-quality, locally farmed oysters in general. The crowd loved it.

I've done similar multi-oyster events before and since, to great effect, even when I was the only grower present. When promoting a niche product, it helps to have multiple niches. This is one of the reasons I became involved in the ECSGA.



ECSGA President
Dan Grosse

Biography

My background is in marine biology and environmental policy. I did my undergraduate work in natural resources at the University of Michigan, and my graduate work in fisheries biology and environmental policy at the University of Washington. I have worked in government, foundation, university and consulting sectors. In 1996

I founded an environmental consulting company, TerrAqua Environmental Science and Policy, LLC, in Washington, D.C., and I also consult with several other companies.

We have worked on aquaculture and agriculture development studies and projects for clients ranging from small, distressed, traditional, maritime and

Native-American communities to a *Fortune 500* company. These projects often encompass cultural, environmental and economic preservation. My company's other practice areas include natural resources assessment and management, and environmental program evaluation.

Earlier, I advised clients – government agencies, environmental law firms, universities, *Fortune 500* companies – on sustainable development issues, and on the fate and transport of environmental contaminants and assessment of ecological and human health risks in marine and aquatic ecosystems. Earlier, I evaluated global climate change, international ocean issues, water quality issues, coastal protection, aquaculture and the fishing industry at the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Navy. I have worked as a farmer on Israeli agricultural collectives. Currently, I grow oysters commercially in Chincoteague, Va. I am also an adjunct associate professor at the University of Maryland's University College Graduate Program in Environmental Management.

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Walk on the Hill

continue to be a strong engine of green job growth.

We also conducted a briefing for USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture officials on issues of ocean acidification that took up the better part of a morning. We repeated our support for USDA's NRCS conservation grants, FSA crop insurance programs and ARS breeding programs as ways to mitigate and adapt to the pH changes that threaten our future growth.

Tuesday we split up into teams and headed for the House, meeting with Reps. McIntyre and Jones (N.C.), Hoyer and Ruppertsburger (Md.), Runyon and LoBiondo (N.J.), Courtney, Bishop and Israel (N.Y.), McGovern (Mass.), DeLauro (Conn.), Southerland (Fla.), Scott (Ga.) and Pingree (Me.). Dan Grosse, Pete Terry, Mike Oesterling and a contingent of Virginia growers met with their

delegates: Goodlatte, Wittman, Forbes and Warner.

Wednesday we met with Senators Gillibrand (N.Y.), Lautenberg (N.J.), Collins (Maine), Mikulski and Cardin (Md.), and Whitehouse and Reed (R.I.). As a rule we try to target lawmakers on House or Senate Agriculture and Appropriations committees and those who have worked well with us in the past. Of course we also visit the offices of lawmakers in the home states of ECSGA members who make the walk with us.

The mood among House staffers this year was pretty bleak, with nobody feeling optimistic that anything could get done and everybody sick of fighting about the budget. There was not much hope of avoiding "the sequester" or confidence about passing a Farm Bill.

On the Senate side the mood was a little more upbeat, and we voiced our support for aquaculture programs and research funding to solve some of our most vexing issues. We don't expect any increases in aquaculture research funding, but we're trying to at least slow the rate of decline.

On the bright side, *The World Is Your Oyster* reception at Acadiana was a fun event to reinforce the messages we delivered through the week. We had three raw bars serving oysters from each coast while a dozen chefs from all over the country prepared shellfish for the eager crowd of over 500.

The value of this event becomes more apparent each year as we meet with elected officials, staffers and agency representatives who remember it and look forward to our annual visit.

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Jones Act

compensation and crew (Jones Act) coverage. The more-palatable, long-term solution would require a large, unified effort by the aquaculture industry: a legislative fix at the federal level to exclude coastal aquaculture workers from seeking relief under the Jones Act. They are already excluded from the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, so there may be some precedent here.

For more information, including limited pricing guidelines, please visit our website at www.eastern-shoreinsurance.com/seafood.html and click on Aquaculture/Seafood Growers.

You can also contact our office directly at (800) 442-6187. Take care and keep swimming!



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Rust Tide Now Plaguing Cape Cod

by Sandra E. Shumway,
University of Connecticut
Dept. of Marine Sciences

At the Massachusetts Aquaculture Association's annual meeting on Feb. 28 I heard some very disturbing news. For the past four years Dick Krause of Aquaculture

Research Corp in Dennis, Mass., has been experiencing massive mortalities of clam seed in his upwellers. This past year he finally identified what he believes is the culprit, a dinoflagellate called *Cochlodinium polykrikoides*. Locals are calling it "Rust Tide" because this particular alga actively swims in large visible "rivers" on the surface, coloring the water reddish-brown. After a few weeks it typically encysts and drops to the bottom, where it can cause anoxia; sometimes turning the bottom black and causing mortalities in fish and shellfish. When conditions are right, it emerges, swims to the surface and starts dividing again, creating the next bloom.

This is not the "Red Tide" you are probably familiar with, the one

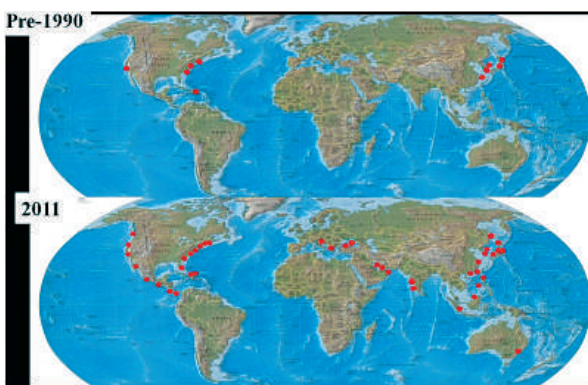
associated with paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP). *Cochlodinium* causes fish and shellfish kills, but apparently does not impact humans. There are reports that it kills clam seed, oyster seed and scallops. There may be a size of refuge (in that larger shellfish may just stop feeding until the bloom passes), but the local data on this bug are pretty thin.

Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) come in many flavors, shapes and

sizes. Some cause oxygen depletion, some cause amnesia, diarrhea or paralysis. This one appears to kill fish and shellfish.

Cochlodinium produces copious quantities of mucous, which may help it stay aggregated in these visible "rivers of death" and may enhance the toxic effects by clogging gills. Recent studies suggest that *Cochlodinium* may produce reactive oxygen species such as hydrogen peroxide that contribute to fish and shellfish mortality.

Rust Tide aggregations have been observed out on the Nantucket Shoals, in coastal waters on both sides of Cape Cod, and on the east end of Long Island. Experts say that *Cochlodinium* is found all over the world in tropical and warm-temperate waters and has been



Map by Kudela and Gobler, 2011 (in press)
Global distribution of *Cochlodinium* over the past 20 years. Note extensive global expansion.

around for decades. Local observers have noted its presence for the past four or five years, usually in late summer, when shellfish seed suddenly stops growing and somebody calls in an expert.

This is probably a new problem for New England, but it may have been here for years at very low levels. Perhaps this alga is simply thriving in our longer, warmer summers. Either way it is very scary to look at what *Cochlodinium* is doing in South Korea, which is similar to Cape Cod in latitude,

currents and temperature. It has been devastating areas in Korea for decades, and seems to get worse every year, causing massive fish kills and shellfish mortalities.

It would appear that harmful algal blooms are increasing in frequency worldwide. We don't know whether this is because of pollution, climate change, or just that we're getting better at observing and reporting these events. One thing for sure, we really don't need another form of pestilence to make our jobs harder.

Restaurant Allies

Following are some thoughts from two of the dozen chefs who brought their unique creations to the *World is Your Oyster* tri-coastal reception held at Acadiana in Washington, D.C., in January. This year we served over 500 guests and offered three separate raw bars (one for each coast). Tickets to the annual event are a hot commodity, attracting members of Congress and their grateful staffers, as part of the traditional *Walk on the Hill*.

Rich Gunter



Chef Rich Gunter of operation:eatery.

Throughout his 20-year career Chef Rich Gunter has honed his culinary skills in some of the finest kitchens in Washington, D.C. Gunter remembers fall-

ing in love with oysters at the age of five. "Growing up in Charleston, South Carolina, we ate a lot of roasted oysters, especially during the wintertime. I just remember it being this warm, salty, juicy, chewy thing. It didn't occur to me what it was; I just knew that I liked it and it was delicious."

Gunter is on the record saying he prefers the taste of East Coast oysters. "They are not dense, but they have a *Pop!* to them. Once you break the outer layer of the oyster itself, it just kind of pops in your mouth and you get this juice and goodness."

He enjoys a briny oyster, saying the degree of saltiness depends on, "where you are in the (for lack of a better term) terroir, which in oyster-speak is the salinity of the water. In brackish water they are going to tend

to be a little 'sweeter,' and some could be a little more alkaline, metallic in taste. [My theory is that] a lot of your colder water oysters have an interesting balance for such a long period of time because they do not have a long spawning cycle.

Rich Gunter is Executive Chef and VP of Culinary Operations at operation:eatery, a culinary think-tank in Washington, D.C., and expects to open his new restaurant, *The Pig and Pearl*, soon.

Grand Central Oyster Bar

This year Grand Central Oyster Bar celebrates its centennial, while continuing its ongoing commitment to the best suppliers of fish and shellfish. To this day the Oyster Bar continues its tradition of cultivating and reaching out to a great number of suppliers, far and wide. Our commitment to and support of the ECSGA is essential in keeping sustainable seafood and informative issues at the forefront.

The Oyster Bar first opened its doors on February 2, 1913 – the same day as the launch of Grand Central Terminal.

"A Centennial is a rarity in the restaurant industry, and that is a great tribute to the Oyster Bar that it has stood the test of time in grand style," says Executive Chef Sandy Ingber, a.k.a. the Bishop of Bivalves.

"It will be a celebration of historic proportions. We're all proud to be a part of a grand anniversary for our grand restaurant."

The Grand Central Oyster Bar is open Monday through Saturday from 11:30 am until 9:30 pm. For reservations call (212) 490-6650 or visit www.oysterbarny.com.



Executive Chef Sandy Ingber (r), Chef Peter Fu.



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Product Spotlight:

Allen-Bailey Tag & Label

by Colleen Knoeck

Allen-Bailey Tag & Label, Inc., was founded in 1911 by Samuel Allen and James Bailey. They started out manufacturing wooden nursery tags, about the size and shape of tongue depressors, that could be written on with a wax crayon, then wired to a tree or shrub. The 1920s saw durable papers replacing wooden tags, and Allen-Bailey branched into retail markets – chemical, automotive, steel and wire.

By the early 1970s, after New York state had mandated the basic layout of shellfish tags that endure to this day, the company expanded into the shellfish market.

Throughout its 100-year history, Allen-Bailey has continued to incorporate new technologies to improve its product line. The company now provides shellfish growers on all three U.S. coasts with custom-printed shipper and harvester shellfish tags made of DuPont Tyvek® and Igneous®, a polyester synthetic paper that can be loaded into laser or thermal transfer printers.

Taking full advantage of the latest technological advances, the company has added QR codes to the existing layout of laser-imprintable tags containing a consecutive number. QR codes, especially those containing a GUID (Globally Unique ID), allow growers to link specific harvest data – date, time, temperature, location, and as much custom data as they want – to a database that will provide full traceability of tagged product.



As Bob Rheault has suggested in his marketing presentations, the shellfish market lends itself well to self-promotion. Growers and processors can highlight the attributes of their products on a single, waterproof sheet packed right into shellfish boxes. These custom branding sheets can be easily changed, and can contain directions for proper handling, special recipes for restaurants, information on how to order more product and more.



Weatherly Bates of Alaska Shellfish Farms recently added a 4-in. x 8-in. carton label to her outbound shipments, remarking, "We love the labels. We put them on all our boxes and put extras in the boxes for our customers. I think they are liking them because we are getting lots of orders!"

Allen-Bailey enjoys participating in trade events – the Boston Seafood Show, PCSGA Conferences, ISSC meetings and others. It gives us the opportunity to renew acquaintances, meet new people and hear about the latest challenges faced by this thriving market.

For more information on ordering custom tags or for marketing and branding samples, visit our website at www.abtl.com or contact Ron Marley, (877) 853-0598, rmarley@abtl.com.

Industry Mourns Loss of Mike Voisin

With heavy hearts we report the passing of Mike Voisin, a leader in the Gulf Oyster Industry Council. Mike died of a heart attack at age 59 in his hometown of Houma, La.



Photo — Ed Lallo, Louisiana Seafood News

Mike was a seventh-generation oysterman, owner of Motivait Seafoods, and a passionate leader and tireless advocate for our community. Whether you knew Mike personally or not, if you work in the shellfish industry you owe a debt of gratitude to this man. Mike taught many of us how to battle against regulators who would shut us down, while showing us how to be effective advocates for our community by educating our leaders in Washington D.C.

Mike founded the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, and he chaired the National Fisheries Institute, the Gulf Coast Seafood Marketing Coalition, the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, the Louisiana Fishing Community Recovery Coalition, and the Louisiana Oyster Task Force (among others). He was also a leader in the Mormon church.

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ECSGA's 2013 Legislative Issues

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

Our top issue this year is the **EU trade embargo** that has blocked our ability to export shellfish to EU countries since 2009.

Paul DiStefano and Bill Jones from the FDA met two-dozen growers from the three coasts to discuss our concerns. Although FDA officials had promised last year to send auditors over to the EU to examine sites with clean waters, they reported that little had been done to resolve the EU trade embargo dispute. It was our hope that having the U.S. open up imports from "Class A" waters in Europe would persuade EU negotiators to come back to the table and eventually allow our product into the lucrative EU market.

In an ideal world the two decisions should be made independently, based on public health concerns. But the world is not perfect, and someone has to blink first.

Not only was the FDA unable to provide a timeline for moving forward, the agency won't even consider the reality that our ability to ship to the EU should be in any way linked to their ability to ship to us. DiStefano admitted that this was not really a public health concern! We are not really expecting EU shellfish to come across the pond to our markets because their prices are higher!

Several Senate offices asked the FDA to come in and explain the issues, but so far we have gotten no

indication of any movement from the FDA. If powerful senators with FDA oversight are unable to induce action then I guess we will have to turn back to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and see if they can apply some pressure for us.

Funding for Milford Lab

NMFS currently spends less than seven-tenths of one percent of its budget on Aquaculture Research. With the New England ground fish crisis spawning a raft of lawsuits from fishermen and NGOs, NMFS has been forced into shifting even more resources to stock assessment and fisheries. Our friends on the Senate Appropriations Committee appreciate the desire to preserve our research dollars. Several of us wrote letters to our senators praising the work done in the Milford Lab and pleading that funds for aquaculture not be cut. We received a favorable response from the administrators promising that funding for the lab was secure.

The Farm Bill

Congress passed a temporary extension of the Farm Bill through September 2013. Best-case scenario has a five-year Farm Bill passing by September. The March "sequester" triggered automatic \$30-billion across-the-board cuts in Farm Bill spending, but even if the sequester is rescinded, the current House Plan projects \$25-35 billion in cuts. In current drafts the Research Title (ARS, NIFA) would

be uncut, while the Conservation Title (NRCS) would lose \$6 billion in administrative support. Nutrition programs and direct payments to farmers were expected to take the biggest hits under the House plan.

H-2B Visas

In virtually every office we visited we voiced our support for the H-2B Visa program and expressed our need for rational immigration reform. Maryland's Sen. Barbara Mikulski is taking the lead on a national overhaul of the H-2B program, but with the expectation that substantial comprehensive immigration reform may never pass.

Specialty Crops

Last year Rep. Courtney (Conn.) submitted legislation to re-establish shellfish as specialty crops under the Farm Bill. This would enable producers to qualify for small, state block grants to do research and marketing work. Last year we were not able to get much traction on this bill, but these things often take years. Courtney wants to re-submit the bill this year, and we are working to get a companion bill started in the Senate.

Ocean Acidification

We mentioned ocean acidification quite a bit, and the staffers and senators we talked to seemed to understand the issue well. Several Virginia growers are having water quality issues in their hatcheries and are looking for assistance to do more elaborate monitoring. Production impacts on the West Coast of 50-80 percent were cited,

while the East Coast is seeing localized, eutrophication-induced acidification where decomposing organic matter leads to high CO₂ levels. Monitoring efforts do not seem to get much traction in D.C., but we got a better reception when we discussed mitigation and adaptation efforts. We are seeking funds for stepped-up ARS breeding efforts to identify shellfish lines that can tolerate the acidic waters being predicted by models over the next 50 years.

Next Steps

We anticipate trying to do another Wine and Oysters members event and possibly another staff briefing on ocean acidification and permitting challenges like the ones we did last fall. I am trying to follow up with all of our office visits, especially to see if we can't find some sort of resolution to the EU trade issue.

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Industry Mourns Voisin

While no one ever heard Mike raise his voice in anger, he could nonetheless be a formidable opponent. He was perceptive and patient and we were lucky to have him working on our side. With Mike's passing we will all have to step up our efforts to fill the giant void he leaves behind.

"During the last 40 years, Mike Voisin has done more for the domestic seafood industry than any other individual, including leading our recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina and the 2010 BP Oil Spill," wrote Sen. Mary Landrieu, D-La.

"Mike had a unique ability to not just listen, but to really hear what people were saying. His patience allowed him to find consensus when it appeared all but impossible," she continued.

Like any oysterman, Mike was very proud of his Gold Band Oysters, a pre-shucked oyster made possible by his father Ernest "Ernie" Voisin's patented, high-pressure processing technology that eliminates most bacteria.

Mike is survived by his wife, Sarah, six children and 14 grandchildren. Sarah suggested that donations in his honor be made to Friends of the Fishermen.

For more information on memorial donations, visit www.friendsofthefishermen.org.

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