

**Aquaculture Advisory Council
Meeting Agenda
January 23, 2024, from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
Augusta DMR Room 224 or [Microsoft Teams](#)**

Call to order – **Fiona de Koning** 10:00-10:01

Roll call – **William Fearn** 10:01-10:05

- Fiona de Koning – Chair [Present]
- Greg Lambert – Vice-Chair [Present]
- Amanda Ellis [Present]
- Briana Warner [Present]
- Christopher Davis [Present]

Adoption of minutes from last meeting – **Fiona de Koning** 10:05-10:10

Mr. Lambert motioned to adopt minutes, Ms. de Koning invited any comment, all but Mr. Davis voted in favor of adopting. Mr. Davis abstained.

AQ Listening Meetings – **Kohl Kanwit** 10:10-10:25

- March 6, 2024 : [Portland - Aquaculture Listening Meeting](#)
- March 7, 2024 : [Belfast - Aquaculture Listening Meeting](#)
- March 13, 2024 : [Newcastle - Aquaculture Listening Meeting](#)
- March 14, 2024 : [Machias - Aquaculture Listening Meeting](#)
- March 21, 2024 : [Ellsworth - Aquaculture Listening Meeting](#)

Ms. Kanwit announced that the DMR has decided to host a series of public aquaculture listening sessions. Ms. Kanwit read a copy of the announcement for these meetings which will be available on the DMR’s website. DMR has invited Mr. Craig Freshley to facilitate these sessions. The department intends to specifically target legislators in coastal districts for invitation to these sessions. Ms. Kanwit outlined some of the specific mechanics of how the meetings will be conducted. Mr. Freshley opted to hold these as “fishbowl” style discussions. Ms. Warner asked how stakeholders for panels were chosen and Ms. Kanwit answered that they were crowd sourced from aquaculture industry associated individuals with whom the department is familiar but specified that these people are not specifically “department favorites” and that this is meant to be an honest discussion around aquaculture, not an aquaculture pep rally. Mr. Davis asked whether the panelists were chosen from people local to the location of the meeting. Kathryn Stein, DMR fisheries pathologist, suggested sharing the announcement of the meetings on social media in addition to the typical routes that DMR makes announcement through.

Legislative Update – **Kohl Kanwit** 10:25-10:35

Two bills in this session that are relevant to AqAC: LD 2064 “An Act to Amend the Laws Regarding Certain Advisory Councils and Boards Related to the Department of Marine Resources” presented by Rep. Hepler. The aim of the bill is to make the AqAC chair an ex-officio member of the DMR advisory council, to change the composition of the AqAC, and to incorporate other changes previously agreed upon by the council into statute.

Ms. de Koning encouraged the council to begin considering potential nominees for the seats that will be added because of the statutory changes. She specifically would like to see a broad range of perspectives in these nominees.

LD 2065 “An Act to Amend Maine’s Aquaculture Leasing Laws,” also presented by Rep. Hepler and is another bill that DMR was involved in. This bill removes some unnecessary, dated language from statute, amends the notice requirement for standard lease applications, and clarifies language allowing DMR to consider the financial and technical capabilities of lease applicants preliminarily, as well as clarifying comment period provisions and establishes a process whereby a person with a limited purpose lease may apply to convert that to a standard lease so long as no parameters of the lease are being changed.

There was extensive discussion regarding the changes presented in LD 2065 particularly regarding the changes to hearing notice requirements and the new provision allowing 1:1 conversion of experimental leases to standard leases. Members of the public had several questions about what the DMR is doing to improve communication around hearings, about the hearing process, and about the experimental lease/standard lease conversion process.

Ms. Kanwit apologized to Ms. de Koning for the disruptive nature of some of the public questions regarding this agenda item that came in through Microsoft Teams and expressed deference to Ms. de Koning as Chair of the Council with regard to whether and when public comments/questions should be responded to.

Vibrio Regulation Changes - Kohl Kanwit

10:35-10:50

Ms. Kanwit shared changes to Chapter 115 of DMR regulations and gave background for why the changes are necessary. Vibrio controls for oyster are being expanded statewide where previously they were in limited areas that have particularly warm water and/or high presence of vibrio. Ms. Kanwit clarified that based on existing data there is currently no plan to include the intertidal hard clam fishery in vibrio controls. Part of this change is removing the requirement for a vibrio harvest and handling plan and instead allowing only two options: either icing product immediately upon harvest or getting it to a dealer within two hours. Ms. de Koning expressed concerns about the timeline for implementing these changes and Ms. Kanwit responded that the Department will make every effort to ensure that harvesters are aware of these changes, when they will be going into effect, and how best to comply with them.

Work plan - Fiona de Koning

10:50-11:10

Mr. Davis nominated Ms. de Koning to continue serving as chair and all present, except Ms. de Koning who abstained, voted in favor of re-electing Ms. de Koning.

Ms. de Koning asked the council members to talk to people to determine what issues need addressing by the council and to consider nominees.

Public input - Fiona de Koning

11:10-11:20

Other business - Fiona de Koning

11:20-11:50

1. Programmatic updates – Amanda Ellis

Aquaculture division participated in regional meetings to advise municipalities on how they can participate in the leasing process and how municipalities can apply for leases for conservation

purposes. The renewal season closed and was much more streamlined than previous seasons. All available positions in AQ have been filled with the hiring of a new scientist. Ms. De Koning asked the department for a list of all the positions in the AQ division. Ms. Kanwit will bring a list of positions to the next meeting. AQ has a legal extern through Maine Law School for the spring semester he will be helping with lease decisions and researching legal questions.

Ms. Ellis also wanted to highlight storm reporting and encourage aquaculturists to report damage from storms even if they aren't necessarily looking to get any kind of disaster relief/assistance themselves.

2. Website highlights – **Amanda Ellis**

- a. Public participation: <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/aquaculture/public-participation-in-aquaculture-leasing>

Totally overhauled Public Participation in Aquaculture page on DMR website in recognition of the fact that stakeholders learning about aquaculture for the first time might have difficulty navigating the process and figuring out how they can be involved. Ms. de Koning stated her appreciation for the changes to the website.

- b. Municipal participation: <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/aquaculture/municipal-participation-in-aquaculture>

Also created a separate page for municipal participation information and hosting targeted outreach to municipalities.

3. Industry input

Mr. Davis mentioned that he has heard complaints about the difficulty of seeing LPAs on the online lease map since they are relatively small and asked if it were possible to address this.

Mr. Davis also had a question about the difficulty in naming attendants for leases during the renewal period because sites may not have necessarily hired their summer staff yet at that point and if it is a possibility to make this process easier. Ms. Ellis responded that changes to this system are unlikely.

Mr. Thomas Henninger, a member of the public, asked a question about LPAs being created and then neglected. Ms. Kanwit advised that the department does annual inspections of all lease sites and LPAs and that this is not a widespread issue but that there have been occasional complaints that are typically addressed by marine patrol.

4. Schedule next meeting

April 9th 11:00AM – 1:00PM

Adjourn - **Fiona de Koning**
Adjourned **12:15**

11:50-11:55