

Aquaculture Advisory Council
Meeting Agenda
June 26, 2025, from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Augusta DMR Room 118 or [Microsoft Teams](#)

Call to order – **Greg Lambert**

11:05-11:06

Greg Lambert welcomed new member, Jake Patryn, to the council.

Roll call – **William Fearn**

11:06-11:06

✓	Greg Lambert - Chair	✓	Lauren Gray
✓	Will Owen – Vice Chair	✓	Matt Moretti
✓	Jake Patryn	✓	Steve Zimmerman
✓	Christopher Davis		

Adoption of minutes from last meeting – **Greg Lambert**

11:06-11:07

Chris Davis motioned. Will Owen seconded.

The minutes from the prior meeting were unanimously adopted.

Biotoxin update – **DMR**

11:07-11:28

Kohl Kanwit provided a biotoxin update. Historically, oysters were thought of as discriminate feeders that do not preferentially feed on *Alexandrium*, a phytoplankton that causes red tide or PSP. Therefore, DMR collected oyster samples last, after mussels and clams. DMR is rethinking the risk and testing protocols for oyster aquaculture sites, which are typically exposed all the time and not based on tides like wild shellfish. Lumbos Hole in Harpswell is a sentinel site where an annual algal bloom happens each summer and oysters are monitored there. Offshore blooms that get blown inshore, like experienced this season, present a management challenge.

DMR would like to work on a better way to monitor biotoxin levels in oysters and would like to collaborate with the AqAC and the aquaculture industry. DMR would like to collect more baseline data, especially in Casco Bay. All council members agreed AqAC should be involved.

Matt Moretti asked, if Maine has had a documented illness involving oysters.

Ms. Kanwit explained that all documented PSP illnesses in Maine have been from closed areas and involved mussels or clams.

Mr. Moretti asked why there was an increased interest in oysters.

Ms. Kanwit responded that DMR follows the National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) which sets PSP limits and recently oyster samples have exceeded the limit of 80 and required closures. While it is correct no one was at risk of getting sick, the impact to the industry was significant and could potentially be reduced if DMR developed a more refined oyster sampling strategy.

Lori Howell stated that NSSP implementation in ME has been well done and recommended a workshop with industry to gather new perspectives and to educate the industry.

Dr. Davis recommended coordinating a workshop before the Northeast Aquaculture Conference and Exposition and would be willing to help with workshop planning.

Committee Updates – Steve Zimmerman, Lauren Gray, Chris Davis

11:28-11:39

Alternative Paths for Upwellers – Mr. Zimmerman provided an update. The committee met once since the last AqAC meeting. Learned that the desired upweller/nursery and husbandry activities could be done through a new license that would be renewed annually. Draft regulatory text for the new license is ready for committee review at their next meeting.

Lease Amendments – Ms. Gray provided an update. The committee now meets monthly to expedite recommendations. DMR presented a draft proposal to improve the lease amendment process. The committee will review the proposal at their next meeting.

Lease Process Improvements – Dr. Davis provided an update. The committee met earlier in the month and made a list of ideas to improve lease process, including continued work on the bonding process; having the AqAC assist with online lease application development (request public timeline of the project); and continuing to streamline aquaculture law/rule with the APA.

Aquaculture Division Updates – Amanda Ellis

11:39-11:59

Dr. Amanda Ellis presented an update on experimental application pre-application meeting requirement rulemaking. Dr. Ellis explained the future aquaculture division organizational chart that includes four new positions (one hearings officer, which has already been hired; one marine resource management coordinator; one marine scientist; and one management analyst).

Dr. Ellis stated adding 4 additional staff will allow 77 applications to be processed per year, while it is uncertain how additional staff will impact application processing times. Processing time appears to be decreasing in 2025 and DMR will provide an update in about 6 months. Dr. Ellis noted that a lot of factors can change these numbers including staff vacancies, complex cases, and increasing demands across the program including legal appeals and FOAA requests.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if more staff always mean shortened processing time.

Dr. Ellis replied that the lease processing committee goal is 1 year to process lease that requires a hearing.

Dr. Davis noted in the '80s processing time was 9-10 months.

Work plan - Greg Lambert

12:00-12:14

1. Alternative Paths for Upwellers – existing committee
2. Lease Process Improvements - existing committee
3. Lease Amendments – existing committee
4. Review of the Bonding system (C. Davis)
5. LPA Combination Proposal (M. Moretti)
6. Lease marking requirements (K. Kanwit)

Dr. Davis noted that item 6. is meant to include all buoys, not just corner markers, in a marking requirement discussion.

Ms. Kanwit agreed that the marking requirement work plan item is to look at all marking-related matters for sites, like winter marking, PATON, and inspection program application.

Mr. Lambert stated that when 1, 2, 3 are complete, the council will tackle 4, 5, 6.

Ms. Kanwit asked if biotoxin would be a 7th committee.

Mr. Moretti recommended AqAC form a biotoxin committee to coordinate a workshop for Maine farmers.

Mr. Lambert added the biotoxin committee to the work plan and recommended making it committee 3A, so it is next up on the work plan. The biotoxin in committee membership will include: AqAC members: Matt Moretti (chair), Chris Davis, Greg Lambert; DMR members: Kohl Kanwit, Bryant Lewis, David Miller; Industry members: Lori Howell, Fiona de Koning.

Break

12:15-12:27

Work plan (continued)

12:27-12:30

Mr. Lambert announced committees 1, 2, 3 will wrap up work by September 2025.

Industry input - **Greg Lambert**

12:30-1:36

Mr. Willy Leathers requested a review of Campylobacter outbreak response and lessons learned to explore how to prevent impacts on other growers. Mr. Eric Oransky, business partner of Mr. Leathers, said they are requesting a complete review of growing area classification, sanitary surveys, and illness outbreak response. He also stated they are looking for a scientific study to support the 14-day re-submergence requirement.

Ms. Kanwit explained that Maine's Growing Area program follows NSSP and is audited by FDA every 1-2 years. Annual audit cycle was initiated after Campylobacter outbreak. Audit reports are available. DMR is in full compliance with the NSSP.

Mr. Lambert suggested the growing area program could be discussed on the biotoxin committee. Ms. Kanwit cautioned that the biotoxin and the growing area issues are separate. Keeping the committee's objective clear would be helpful. Perhaps adding another committee to the work plan is a better approach. Maine's water quality challenge is non-point source pollution and the last two years have been exceptionally rainy resulting in many growing area closures.

Dan Devereaux said he recommends more frequent testing in sanitary surveys to smooth out averaging. Recognizing limitations with resource availability for the state, towns could assist with testing frequency. Dr. Davis noted Maine Aquaculture Innovation Center has a small grant program that might be able to assist with a re-submergence study.

Mr. Lambert closed this topic and directed follow-up with individual council members for future discussion.

Schedule next meeting - **Greg Lambert**

01:37-01:41

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at 9:00am-12:00pm

Public Input – **Greg Lambert**

01:41-01:43

Comments from Teams Chat

Dan Devereaux

- Most recent addition of the NSSP. It is worthwhile for all farmers to familiarize themselves with this document. <https://www.fda.gov/media/181370/download?attachment> (Pages 238-248)
- Suggested having a joint meeting with the Shellfish Advisory Council specific to growing area classification, or maybe create a task force between the two since both are impacted by these state programs.
- Around 2007 the DMR conducted a Sanitary Survey Course for municipalities. This was when the DMR was behind in those requirements. Maybe it's time to have another sponsored educational course for municipal officials and help to bring the importance of the accurate sanitary surveys as it relates to shoreside water quality.

Adjourn

01:43

Will Owen-motion. Chris Davis-second.