

Maryland Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission
Minutes from February 28, 2025 Meeting

Commissioners in Attendance: Stephanie Pazzaglia, Stephan Abel, Stephen Howard, Cassie Shirk, Laura Moreno-Davis, Talmage Petty, Bill Sieling, Kyle Gilbert

Commissioners Absent: Troy Wilkins, George O'Donnell, Jason Ruth

Other Attendees: Matthew Scales, Mark Powell, Kristin Hanna, Audrey Broomfield, Kevin Atticks, Matthew Lego, Katherine Charbonneau, Sarah Widman, Allison Albert Guercio, Steve McHenry

Opening Remarks - Stephanie Pazzaglia opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Minutes from the previous meeting (10/24/24) were reviewed and approved. Motion to approve; Bill Seiling, second Steve Howard.

Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act Bill (SB0428)

Katherine Charbonneau and Sarah Widman, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, provided updates and amendments to the bill. Katherine mentioned that they have worked in the past few weeks with commercial watermen on the language of the bill. Katherine and Sarah provided the amendments to the bill. Katherine mentioned that there is a hearing in the House next week on the bill.

Connection with a Chef, Matthew Lego of Leo Annapolis

Chef Matthew Lego provided an overview of his background, of Leo Annapolis, why he sources local seafood, and the opportunities and challenges on purchasing local seafood.

Marketing Updates

Recapped previous campaigns that include, the Thanksgiving CSA boxes that contained seafood items, a recap of the wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish findings, Give the Very Maryland's Best Holiday Guide and a preview into the Shuck & Stout campaign.

Presented on website metrics, highlighting length of time on a few of the webpages, including "Eat Like a Marylander Thanksgiving" and the wild caught Chesapeake blue catfish landing pages. In reviewing midway through the month and campaign, the Shuck & Stout landing webpage is the number 1 most visited landing page, beating out the homepage visits, with a length of time on the page over a minute, that shows a vested interest in the topic. Primarily, web visitors are coming from the US, with 34,000, followed by Hong Kong, Canada and India.

In regards to the social media stats, from November 1, 2024 through February 1, 2025, we were down in reach and link clicks, but this was due to a post that went viral months beforehand. Page follows were up and seafood had three of the top five Instagram posts/reels in the last 90 days and top four of five in stories.

Recapping the Maryland's Best seafood logo in some retail locations for wild-caught Chesapeake blue catfish, we attended and sponsored the U.S. Oyster Festival, Matthew Scales spoke at the Potomac River Conference: Reeling in Invasives about blue catfish, highlighted we sponsored the Jimmy's Famous Seafood TailGOATS, attended and spoke at the Baltimore Yelpies Awards, had blue catfish, with Jimmy's Famous Seafood at Jay Fleming's Holiday party. Also covered the Maryland's Best Expo, we attended the Chesapeake Bay Boat Show, exhibited at the 50th Annual East Coast Commercial Fishermen's and Aquaculture Trade Expo, served blue catfish and Maryland oysters at Maryland Night at the Japanese Embassy, spoke to 200 plus people at the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association Monthly February Dinner, and exhibited with Tilghman Island Seafood with their blue catfish sliders, with a child nutrition label approved at the Maryland School Nutrition Association Conference.

Highlighted several earned media we secured during November through February, and announced our annual Maryland's Best Annual Meeting on April 1st, in person and virtual. Sign up today.

Upcoming initiatives include; Chesapeake Oyster Week (Oyster Recovery Partnership), March 21-31, 2025, amplifying the True Blue Campaign in May/June, pending video production; launching the Eat Like a Marylander - May-September 2025; Chesapeake Oyster Alliance/Chesapeake Bay Trust - Oyster Chef Tour -June 2025. Events and/or trade shows exhibiting include the Ocean City Hotel Motel Restaurant Association Trade Expo, with the Restaurant Association of Maryland Golden Ticket Competition- Black Sea Bass and the RAM Gala- Maryland's Best Chef Partner Award. Also exhibiting at the Seafood Expo North America - Boston, with six co-exhibitors.

Presentations:

- Steve McHenry, MARBIDCO, providing updates on grants and loans as it relates to the Maryland seafood industry
- Allison Albery Guercio, Oyster Recovery Partnership, providing updates on Chesapeake Oyster Week, March 21-31, 2025, along with World is Your Oyster

New Business

- Two new commissioners will join pending approval of the Senate. The commission is still looking for one waterman to fill a vacant seat. Awaiting Troy Wilkins resignation before we can submit a new application.
- Length of term for Chair to consist of two years, which the Chair will fall as Past-Chair. The Vice-Chair will move up to Chair, and the commission will vote to fill the Vice-Chair position. The vote for Vice-Chair would commence at the October 2025 meeting, with the new positions taking effect at the February 2026 meeting. Commission motioned to approve; Bill Seiling first, Stephanie Pazzaglia seconded, with all approvals and no objections.

The next meeting will commence Thursday, May 15, 2025, 3-5pm at MDA HQ or virtual option.
Adjournment -motivated Stephanie Pazzaglia, second by Bill Seiling.