

Maryland Seafood Marketing Advisory Commission
February 22, 2024

Commissioners in Attendance: Stephanie Pazzaglia, Stephan Abel, Bill Sieling, George O'Donnell, Stephen Howard, Kyle Gilbert, Cassie Shirk

Commissioners Absent: Jason Ruth, Talmage Petty, Laura Moreno-Davis

Other Attendees: Matthew Scales, Mark Powell, Kristin Hanna, Lauren Moses, Audrey Broomfield, Stone Slade, Mitchell Bode, Donna Hill, and Sandra Spriggs

Opening Remarks - Stephanie Pazzaglia opened the meeting by welcoming everyone. Stephanie asked everyone to introduce themselves to the board. She thanked everyone for nominating and appointing her as Chair of the Commission as well as Stephan as Vice Chair. Welcome two new seats, Jay Fleming, Retail and Food Industry; and Jason Ruth, Seafood Packer. The commission mission is to increase Maryland seafood sales, consumption, and distribution. There are two open seats available for the commission, both watermen. If you know anyone, contact Matthew Scales. Minutes from the previous meeting (11/16/23) were reviewed and approved.

Marketing Updates

Matthew presented a presentation, featuring - The month of February is FeBREWary, and what pairs well with beer, oysters. This is a way to increase the oyster consumption through a new campaign, Shuck & Stout. Advertisement, sponsorships, and events from 98 Rock/ Ravens events, earned media segments on Fox 45 Baltimore, WJZ-TV, 100.7 The Bay. We got great media coverage, with an audience of about 48 million and an ad publicity value of about \$500,000. Maryland's Best Expo 2024 had a reception the night before the event and had a great turn out and the expo itself had roughly 400 attendees, despite the weather. The annual Maryland 49th Watermen's Expo in Ocean City was a success with blue catfish promotion and recipes.

By utilizing social media, our numbers have increased in terms of growth over the past 90 days, and we have received a lot of engagement and reach. We are trying to capture younger people on Instagram, we cannot go on tik-tok.

Matthew and Kristin will be attending North America Seafood Expo in Boston, along with five other businesses. Matthew and Kristin will be at the Taste of the States in Chicago. A question was asked, for small business owners who cannot attend, how can they tap into this event? Matthew can take promotional materials for restaurants who cannot attend, but he cannot bring food. There is a new monthly newsletter where you can get information about upcoming events. Contact Kristin if you would like to be added to the newsletter which is also on-line.

Secretary Atticks will be at a restaurant (TBD) talking about blue catfish as part of Fish & Hunt Maryland's new Catfish Trail.

One-Stop – MarylandsBest.net is the best way to communicate with consumers and track digital devices when we do campaigns. Consumers can find Maryland products on this website. You must have a One-Stop account and it's free. This site is managed by a contractor and is scheduled to go live March 6, 2024. Growers, producers, restaurants, and retailers are welcome. One-stop has a "how to guide" page.

Seafood Marketing Strategy

The Maryland Seafood Marketing budget is roughly \$170,000. \$30,000 of that is directed towards the Sea Grant Crab Quality Assurance Program. The Seafood Marketing program is funded by DNR collecting money from every waterman when they buy a license, and then DNR sends it to the the Maryland Department of Agriculture. The Maryland Crabmeat Quality Assurance Program, (Bill Seiling), the MDA Seafood marketing program pays for a portion. QAP - MD processor participants pay a very hefty fee to pick crabs and money goes to Chesapeake Bay Seafood Industry Assoc. and defray transportation cost and time spent approximately 1½ days per week. It's always break-even.

Commissioners asked if there is another funding source, or another state agency such as Maryland Department of Environment or Maryland Department of Health that would take on the testing. Currently there is no marketing done with the quality program and seems to be more of a health matter than marketing. Matthew and Mark Powell will meet with Bill Hubbard

Discussion on international crabmeat imports- "According to the World Trade Organization, in 2023, the U.S. imported 24.6M lbs of Indonesian crabmeat, imported 7.2 M lbs of Venezuelan, 6.2 M Vietnam, 5.3 M from China, 5.2 M from Philippines, 4.3 M from India, 1.2 M from Mexico and then about 20 other countries under a million."

MD True Blue - Is the program successful? Should we continue or restructure the program? How can we support the TB program? The original intent was 75% crabmeat. The 75% comes up a lot, it's a premium product. A small number of restaurants make their crab cakes from local crabmeat. There are a lot of challenges to keep it on the menu. We need to reach out to the watermen and make sure we are spending the right dollars in the right way. There are some marketing and educational tutorials for businesses. Do any of our processors have the TB logo on the menu? Bill stated "no" the program is designed at the retail level. At one time, there was a special can, but only one company uses it today. A suggestion was to add to the existing TB logo. Matt and Kristin will come up with a proposal. Approximately 50 people are in the program. Do we incorporate Maryland live crabs into the program? If selling direct, link it to the seafood marketing license. George O'Donnell has the list he will send to Kristin Hanna, who can look at the different categories.

Crabs that are caught outside of Maryland but processed in Maryland makes it a Maryland product per Bill Seiling. Commissioner Fleming asked who tests the foreign crab meat. Bill Seiling said MDH.

Commissioner recommended mixing the Maryland jumbo lump with lump tutorial video for chefs to help with price and purchase of Maryland crab meat. Additionally, a direct to restaurant promotion as an educational piece, not using any funds.

On March 6th, the Maryland's Best One Stop will have a refreshed look to it, and encourage those who sell to consumers to register. Processing will be listed.

MD Oyster Pledge – 100% achievable. We have awesome oysters here with a lot of variety, farm oyster, wild oyster, etc. (slide show) presented with live, farm and wild oyster. Oyster recipes to boost sales to the younger generation. How can we encourage restaurants to sell Maryland oysters all year round? Perhaps, MDA can promote an educational component. Wild oyster roast is popular in the south. How can we get the millennium interested?

The discussion on all logos, from Maryland's Best Seafood, True Blue, and now possibly Oyster Pledge, several commission members recommended to keep it simple and use the Maryland's Best Seafood logo across the board.

There is a NOAA Blue Catfish taskforce with sub-committees which includes watermen, (commercial, recreational) industry, processors, states, Virginia, MD. Needs more representation.

National Oyster Half Shell Day is March 31, 2024; four to five restaurants in Annapolis will be serving six free oysters, to the first 100 registrations. It will be aired on Fox 45 on March 29th to promote, along with newsletters and social media. Working on a logo and registration. Oyster Recovery Partnership is still doing the National Oyster Week in August. Kyle suggested to Matthew a Buy Local Seafood Challenge, which MDA is planning to launch in June in Ocean City.

It was also suggested that there should be a Maryland Oyster Day, perhaps something that is designated by legislation. Some felt the day should be in the fall, others in January or February. MDA staff will look at this and see where to take it. Perhaps doing a poll, publicly or at least in our newsletter.

Another suggestion tied to the June Buy Local Seafood Challenge announcement was a video series of Ocean City seafood. There are many stories to tell of watermen out of Ocean City, and the species they are catching, such as shrimp, lobster, flounder and more. Commissioner Gilbert can help identify the waterman.

Meeting adjourned at 4:51pm.

Next meeting will take place at MD HQ on May 16 2024, from 3-5pm.