

Mariculture Workforce Development Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

November 18, 2016

Attendees: Paula Cullenberg (Alaska Sea Grant), John Kiser (Rocky Bay Oysters), Jim Aguiar (Eagle Shellfish Farm), Myrna Gardner (CCTHITA), Eric Wyatt (Blue Starr Oyster), Adam Smith and Christi Colles, DNR and Barbara Brown, DOLWD

Introduction:

- Welcome to new members, John and Jim and guests, Adam, Christi and Barbara.

Discussion:

Reviewed the goals discussed on last month's call:

- **Goals for Mariculture Workforce Development for aquatic farms, hatchery and nursery operations:**
 - Increase profits and business success for those already in the industry;
 - Ensure hatcheries and nurseries and farms have skilled workforce to draw from;
 - Inform, recruit and retain new entry into industry.

The rest of the discussion focused on the potential for an apprenticeship program. John Kiser's vision would be to house an apprentice at his farm for the summer and then next summer give the apprentice 100,000 seed to begin their own operation, next year begin application for a farm, 3rd year build rafts and 4th year, establish their own farm. John could take up to 2 apprentices.

Jim Aguiar has lost a lot of oysters due to lack of labor to work at the farm. Jim's vision is to have a summer apprentice on his farm, which is larger than John's. He generally hires two employees. It would be a help if the salary for an apprentice could be covered somehow, especially since they would be inexperienced. He could potentially take up to 2 apprentices in a summer.

One concept discussed was an apprentice spending 2 weeks on Jim's farm and 2 weeks on John's farm and then have the apprentice choose an operation for the rest of the summer.

Adam Smith noted that DNR has seen a lot of failed farms which the state needs to clean up. The state is supportive of any way to increase the success of farms. Maybe an apprenticeship

“stamp” could contribute to the permit process. John Kiser noted that the Farm Service Administration felt that a completed apprenticeship could make it easier for an FSA loan.

Barbara Brown with the Dept of Labor and Workforce Development and an apprenticeship expert noted that apprentices begin at some % of a journey level wage and move up in 1,000 hour increments. For example, they year 60%, 70%, 80% and 90% of journey level salaries for each level. There is also some book learning, formal or informal training required for an apprentice. She noted that the shellfish farming apprenticeship discussion is more entrepreneurial focused rather than an employer-employee relationship so may not fit the DOLWD apprenticeship format.

Myrna Gardner noted that the tribal workforce funds could be used to support workforce development and an apprenticeship with more flexibility than the DOLWD programs. The program could incentivize the completion by say, purchasing start up gear.

Maybe a person could try it out for 90 days and then decide if they want to continue.

John Kiser has also looked into programs that could incentivize vets to participate. Barbara says that is in partnership with DOLWD.

The group noted that John Kiser was scheduled to talk about this at the ASGA meeting next month in Anchorage.

Note: pay range is minimum wage or a bit more plus room and board. Work available for 7-8 months per year.

Action items:

Barbara Brown will outline what is needed to develop a program that encourages vets.

Myrna will outline what she needs to get an apprenticeship launched.

John will talk about apprenticeships and get input from farmers at the ASGA meeting December 8 and 9 in Anchorage.

Next meeting will be set after the ASGA meeting.

