REPORT OF THE USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

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The Committee met on October 19, 2014 at the Sheraton Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri, from 12:30pm to 4:00pm. There were 13 members and 12 guests present.

Time-Specific Paper Title.

N/A.

Presentations & Reports

1. Update from the Office of Aquaculture, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Presenter and Affiliation: Kevin Amos, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

He reported on NOAA's efforts on offshore aquaculture which included:

1. Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Aquaculture

NOAA has published the proposed rule to implement the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Regulating Offshore Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico. The proposed rule was published on August 28 and the comment period on the on the FMP ends on October 27, 2014. The FMP process is authorized via the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This FMP applies to offshore waters (aka "EEZ" – 3 to 200 miles offshore) in the Gulf of Mexico region. It applies only to species that are currently managed via FMP's in the Gulf. NOAA looks forward to receiving comments from the committee. The rule and online commenting can be found at:

http://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2008-0233-1134

2. First commercial offshore aquaculture site approved in California

The Catalina Sea Ranch has obtained the necessary permits to operate a mussel farm off the coast of California on the San Pedro shelf. The farm, which is permitted for 100 acres, plans to stock long lines with mussels in the coming year and hopes in the future to raise other species such as scallops and sea cucumbers. This is the many years of collaborative work between NOAA and other regulating federal and state agencies.

3. Improving Access to Sites for Marine Aquaculture

In the same vein, the Office of Aquaculture continues to work with other NOAA offices, Army Corps of Engineers, industry, the restoration community, and state and tribal partners to improve access to sites for marine aquaculture.

Kevin also reported on some pending publications authored/coauthored by Office of Aquaculture which may be of interest to the committee as well as others in industry as well as the fish health community. These articles entitled "Environmental Performance of Marine Net pen Aquaculture in the United States" and **"**U.S. Response to a Report of Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus in Western North America" will be published in the American Fisheries Society's magazine, *Fisheries.*

He also spoke about the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Fish Farms in the Caribbean which was in response to concerns by the Coral Reef Task Force on aquaculture impacts in Caribbean waters.

NOAA worked with industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop BMPs for marine cage culture in the U.S. Caribbean. More details and access to the report are available at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/aquaculture/index.htm

NOAA continues to work with its partners in the United States Department of Agriculture (USADA) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to implement the National Aquatic Animal Health Plan (NAAHP). Currently, the three agencies are collaborating on developing an updated, contemporary implementation strategy that will outline deliverables, dates of delivery and projected costs. He also reported that the interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU) about the shared aquatic animal health responsibilities is being update/revised and is currently being reviewed this MOU is being reviewed by USDA.

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Inspection Service: Aquaculture Update

Presenter and Affiliation: Lynn Creekmore, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Inspection Service

Lynn reported on USDA- Veterinary Services Aquaculture Business Plan. This is a 5-year business plan that outlines priorities, objectives and strategies for aquaculture as being done for each of the other 6 animal commodity groups. (http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/vsbp/5_year_business_plan_aquaculture.pdf)

The plan encompasses disease programs, one health, emergency preparedness, comprehensive surveillance and other emerging issues. It will be used to prioritize congressional appropriations and will be reviewed and update annually. Comments about the March 2015 update can be submitted at to VS.SPRS.Feedback@aphis.usda.gov by November 1, 2014.

She also spoke about the Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) Federal Order that was rescinded on June 2, 2014. This decision was based on their risk assessment that concluded that there would not be an increase risk in the spread VHS by removal of the federal order as long as state regulations were kept in place.

She gave an update on the efforts of the National Aquaculture Association (NAA) and APHIS Veterinary Services who are collaborating to draft a Commercial Aquaculture Health Code. This is a non-regulatory approach initiated by representatives from the NAA and is consistent with APHIS initiatives to utilize non-regulatory approaches when appropriate to address animal health issues. This “Code” uses the approach of the OIE Code of Aquatic Animal Health and seeks to clarify and interpret components (e.g. biosecurity, disease investigation and reporting, surveillance, and zoning) most relevant to US commercial aquaculture. It is hoped that this “Code” will help better position commercial producers in the trade markets, domestic and international, and help the commercial aquaculture industry demonstrate adherence to sound practices for aquatic animal health.

She also reported on the Canadian Fish Import Regulations. APHIS and Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) have reached an agreement on a new export program to facilitate trade in fish intended for food service, retail sales, and further processing for human consumption. Shipments from registered facilities will be accompanied by “statement from Exporter”, but not a health certificate endorsed by APHIS. For registered status, facilities need to be inspected by an APHIS veterinary medical officer at least once a year and also maintain standard operating procedures. There are currently 6 facilities which are in Maine and North Carolina. This program will provide an alternative shipping option providing a rapid turn-around for exporters. Further discussions continue with CFIA on protocols for live animals or germplasm intended for research purposes or culture; and ornamental fish trans-shippers.

She also corroborated Kevin Amos’s report about the MOU between the 3 different agencies (see above).

She also told the committee that Module 14 (Evaluation of Aquatic Animals for Detection of Reportable Diseases and Pathogens) for the National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) is available. USDA- Veterinary Services has also obligated funds to update the 2 existing NVAP modules and creating a new aquaculture module in FY15.

She also provided an update on the Infectious Salmon Anemia (ISA) surveillance program in the Pacific Northwest brought about by the unconfirmed report of ISA in sockeye salmon. Although the CFIA investigated and found no ISAV and notified and coordinated with USDA, the US congress requested additional information. State, tribal, federal and industry have worked together. The testing of wild Pacific salmon from 3 regions in Washington and 4 regions in Alaska have been negative for the 1st year's samples and the 2nd year's sample testing is underway. Likewise, testing of farmed salmon from Washington for the virus for 1st and 2nd years' samples are negative thus far.

Veterinary Services Grass Roots Initiative funded an expert panel to address disease related impediments to eastern US shellfish commerce. There are plans to look also for problems for southern US shellfish commerce.

She also reported that training of the USDA's aquaculture liaisons took place in Arkansas (University of Arkansas- Pine Bluff) this year and that the advertisement for the Aquatic Animal Health Program Manager closed on Oct 17

3. American Fisheries Society Fish Health Section Blue Book now open access online

Presenter and Affiliation: Kevin Snekvik, Washington State University, AFS-FHS Tech. Standards Comm.

Kevin reported that all sections of the American Fisheries Society – Fish Health Section's Blue Book is now open access to all online. It is hoped that this will allow the Blue Book to be utilize more by the fish health community. The various chapters will be updated periodically and it is planned to have the chapter update date placed in the table of contents for a year; the chapter update date will also be at the bottom of the page of each chapter.

4. Updates from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Presenter and Affiliation: Joel Bader, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The USFWS Division Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation (FARC) has been renamed Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC). David Hoskins has been named Assistant Director of FAC. Aquatic Animal Health and Aquaculture program has now been incorporated into a new branch called the Branch of Hatchery Operations and Applied Science (BHOAS), in which Kari Duncan is the Branch Chief and Joel Bader it's National Coordinator. The FWS Headquarters will be moving from the Ballston area in Arlington, VA to Falls Church, VA.

Joel provided information on FWS budget for fish health. The President's FY 15 Budget included an increase for National Fish Hatchery Operations. However, congress passed a Continuing Resolution through December 11, 2014, which includes a rescission of 0.05%. Thus there is uncertainty about FY2015 budget beyond December 1. This budget will affect hatcheries, Fish Health Centers (FHCs), and Fish Technology Centers (FTCs). With regards to the Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (AADAP) program, it has been able to withstand decreases in base funding last year (FY 14) and plans to offset further decreases (in FY 15) with increased INAD fees and external funding from FDA (among other sources). These HQ office budgets will likely continue at reduced funding levels for FY 15 which will likely continue to effect invitational travel, grants, IT (databases) and special projects.

Joel also confirmed that the MOU between the 3 federal agencies (NOAA, USFWS and USDA) has been drafted and is under review.

Joel provided additional information on the Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus (ISAV) Surveillance in the Pacific Northwest, He reported that this project is entering the 3rd and final year. Wild salmon samples will continue to be collected and processed. Thus far there are no positive samples. This work was in conjunction with the States of Alaska and Washington, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, NOAA and USDA-APHIS.

He also reported on the efforts to modernize the Title 50 portion 15.13 Salmonid Fish Import (Health) Regulations of the Lacey Act. Suggested changes have been made by the team made up of Fisheries Biologists from all the Fish Health Centers working under the direction of Headquarters. The team is working with the Lacey Tiger Team Chair to brief senior management. No date has been set to complete the overall task of modernizing the language in the Lacy Act, but Title 50, part 15.13 portions has been drafted. It is unlikely that Title 50, part 15.13 portions will move forward until a decision on the overall Act is reached. Partners and industry can expect to be consulted and allowed to comment on changes at a future.

Joel also reported on FWS working with NOAA and USD-APHIS negotiations with Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with regards to the development of health certificates for wild-harvested seafood products going to Canada. The FWS is implementing an agreement with the Canadians to continue the Title 50 program through

December 31, 2014. After that CFIA veterinarians will be the only people the FWS will accept endorsements from Canada and the CFIA will use their own forms, which the FWS will accept as being equivalent to FWS forms.

The FWS has received several letters from USAHA/AAVLD member laboratories requesting consideration of issuing blanket permits and fees for the movement of diagnostic samples for outside the USA laboratories. We have requested that the USAHA/AAVLD issue a statement (as a letter) to us as to what you want as a group and we will respond to such a jointly issued letter. If it is an issue for USAHA/AAVLD we will consider it.

5. Aquatic Pathogen Testing in NAHLN Laboratories

Presenter and Affiliation: Christina M. Loiacono, US Department of Agriculture, Animal Health, Plant Inspection Service- Veterinary Services.

Christina provided the update on the inclusion of aquatic pathogen testing in National Animal Health Laboratory Network Laboratories. This included providing the

Background:

1. 3 phases of implementation:
    a. Phase 1

    NAHLN Methods Technical Working Group (MTWG) will review and approve the SOPs for ISAV and VHSV testing. Existing NAHLN laboratories will be invited to participate in Phase 1 by including ISA and VHS in their NAHLN testing capabilities, taking part in proficiency testing and reporting results as indicated in the SOPs.

    b. Phase 2

    The APHIS Aquatic Animal Health Program along with NAHLN will invite other Federal and State non-NAHLN laboratories (e.g., U.S. FWS Fish Health Laboratories) and private aquatic animal health testing laboratories to consider applying for NAHLN approval and test for the approved aquatic diseases using standardized requirements.

    c. Phase 3

    Aquatic animal pathogens identified by the Aquatic Animal Health Program in consultation with the Subcommittee on *Aquatic Animal Health* (*SAAH*), National Import Export Services (NIES),and NVSL will be added to the NAHLN disease testing list. The NAHLN Coordinating Council will evaluate and approve these prior to being added to the aquatic animal pathogen group within the NAHLN scope. The NAHLN MTWG will review the associated SOPs.

2. NAHLN Laboratory Qualification Checklist For Membership of a Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
    a. Annual renewal
    b. Agree to meet requirements of the NAHLN
        i. Quality Management
        ii. Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) Assays and Investigations
        iii. Sample Handling
        iv. Communication and Reporting
        v. Administrative and Financial Requirements
    c. Request any changes to disease/agent approvals
    d. Signatures needed from State (State Animal Health Officials, etc.) and Federal representative (District Directors or Assistant District Directors)

Progress on Phase 1

1. NAHLN Methods Technical Working Group (MTWG) in the process of reviewing and approving the SOPs for ISAV and VHSV testing. Request to review SOPS went to MTWG and ad hoc reviewers in January 2014. SOP comments from MTWG back to NVSL reference laboratory (DVL) January 21, 2014. SOP comments received by Ad hoc reviewers March 2014. Addressing changes and routing documents through Quality management review. Finalized documents will be provided to NAHLN labs through the portal.

2. Existing NAHLN laboratories have been invited to participate in Phase 1 by including ISA and VHS in their NAHLN testing capabilities. A letter of opportunity notification to add ISAV and VHSV was sent to lab directors Dec. 4, 2013. NAHLN check list (where they indicate an interest) sent to labs in February 2014. 14 laboratories indicated interest and were approved by the NVSL reference laboratory and program staff

3. Existing NAHLN laboratories taking part in proficiency testing and reporting results as indicated in the SOPs. Working with NAHLN for PT registration through the NAHLN Portal. Identified need for labs to hold permits for shipping VHSV virus isolation PTs and this is being worked on between NAHLN and labs. The DVL generating new proficiency panels.

4. Need to reiterate to labs that Aquatic disease testing under the NAHLN scope will be provided by the laboratories under appropriate fee for service. Funding from USDA to support this testing will not be provided.

5. ISO 17043 accreditation required the development and routing through Quality management the a Proficiency Test Plan for Aquatic Pathogens

Progress on Phase 2
This is pending NAHLN restructure.

When restructure is complete, the APHIS Aquatic Animal Health Program along with NAHLN will invite other Federal and State non-NAHLN laboratories (e.g., U.S. FWS Fish Health Laboratories) and private aquatic animal health testing laboratories to consider applying for NAHLN approval and test for the approved aquatic diseases using standardized requirements.

NAHLN restructure discussed:
Laboratory levels

- **Level 1**
  – Large testing capacity
  – Fully accredited
  – BSL3 facilitates
  – LIMS/messaging
  – Trainers
  – Test development and validation

- **Level 2**
  – Similar, but reduced capacity
  – Provisionally accredited
  – No BSL requirements

- **Level 3**
  – Surveillance testing

- **Affiliate Labs**
  – Publically funded that occasionally performs NAHLN related-testing

- **Private Labs**
  – Specific, needed capability to perform testing
  – Relationship with NAHLN lab and SAHO
  – Written, approved plan to avoid conflicts of interest

- **Reference Labs** provide
  – Oversight
  – Training
  – SOPs

– Reference material
– Proficiency testing

The Future of Aquatic Pathogen Testing in NAHLN Laboratories

• Phase 3
– Including more aquatic animal pathogens
– Discuss the need for laboratories to test for export as well as surveillance

Committee Business:

1. In response to the concern over two bills ((S.1153 & H.R.996) introduced by the 2014 Congress a resolution was brought before the committee. After discussion the motion to forward the resolution was made by Betsy Hart and seconded by Kevin Snekvik. The vote was unanimous with one abstention.
2. The committee also discussed the change in leadership as Dr. Kevin Snekvik will be stepping down after serving the maximum number of terms. It was decided that Lester Khoo, the vice chair will shift his representation to AAVLD to increase the number of possible vice-chair nominees since AAVLD requires it's representative to be from an AAVLD or ISO accredited laboratory. It was proposed that Bill Keleher from Kennebec River Biosciences would be the nominee for the vice-chair position.
3. With regards to the USFWS report about a letter to request for blanket importation permits and fees for importation of samples to diagnostic laboratories (see above), the chairs will follow up by consulting Ben Richey, Executive Director of USAHA and Jim Kistler, Executive Director of AAVLD if a letter from the USAHA and AAVLD respectively is possible.

OTHER NOTES: