

NJ Shellfish Culturists Roundup

1998



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March 25, 1999

Atlantic County Library
Galloway Township, NJ

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The evening began with a Welcome and an Explanation of the Evening by Gef Flimlin. This was the fourth annual Shellfish Culturists Roundup meeting, and it was deemed significant enough to keep this practice going into the future. This year the event was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Shellfisheries Association, and the event was held in conjunction with their normal monthly meeting after Association business was completed. There were almost 20 hatchery operators and growers in attendance this year, as well as some new faces. Four hatcheries or land-based nursery system operators participated.

Report of Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center (NRAC) Activities

Mr. Flimlin showed some recent information about the projects funded by NRAC that clearly showed that research on hard clam aquaculture has received very little attention by this funding agency over the past 10 years. One of the reasons this was discussed was that there was very little coordinated input by the industry into this process, and it would be good for the clam industry along the East Coast to come together to discuss the research areas of importance to them and make those needs known to NRAC and other state and federal funding organizations.

Important NJ Issues

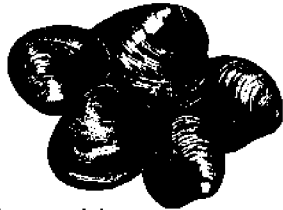
Bob Fenton, President of the NJ Shellfisheries Association, spoke of the issues being raised with the ongoing review of the NJ Title 50 Statutes. Several topics were given attention, such as the testing of clam and oyster seed that may be traveling from state to state over the course of the year, the need to have a state subsidized lab available to do the analysis for diseases, and the raising of license fees, and the proof of residency along with the proof that the person applying for a lease must be a commercial clammer. There was considerable discussion about re-evaluating the state's Leasing Policy and looking at alternative sites for clam culture. The group continued to oppose Sunday Clamming.

Fenton said that a group had met with Dr. Eric Powell of the Haskin Shellfish Research Lab to discuss the direction of the Multi-Species Aquaculture Development Facility in reference to clam aquaculture. He reported that there would be 2 full-time people working in Clam Culture, that there would be a hatchery person hired, and that the Facility would be doing field work to assess growth and predation rates. Bob mentioned that individuals should contact Assemblyman Gibson to have him support funding for the operating funds that would pay for the people and the work just mentioned.



He also said that aquaculturists should be contacting legislators to have a practicing

aquaculturist put on the State Aquaculture Advisory Committee. At this point, there have been a lot of bureaucrats and political appointees on the committee, but not one "real live" aquaculturist. Assemblyman Joe Azzolina's office said that he would amend his original Aquaculture Bill to raise the number of aquaculturists on the committee from two to four or more, if the industry wanted it.



A number of other issues were discussed, including a new bill which would allow dock construction if shellfish beds were the only reason that a dock might be denied, opening up other areas like Little Bay to clam culture, the need to work with other shellfish organizations in NJ to get support for the Bureau of Shellfisheries, which always seems to be underfunded, Brown Tide, and some talk about *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* infections in shellfish.

Weather Synopsis of 1998

There was some ice tight from bank to bank in Dry Bay in early March, and the water temperature was at freezing on New Year's Day.

There was 11" of rain at the beginning of May, and one person mentioned that there were 23 days of rain, then it turned into a drought condition for the summer. Fenton said that he lost his corn crop from the lack of rain, which persisted all summer. The fall was mild with nice weather into December, but there was ice and snow in Dry Bay around Christmas. Chris Scales categorized 1997 as the year of wind and 1998 the year of rain, at least in the spring. He said that the rain and lack of sunlight in the spring contributed to the poor growth of clams.

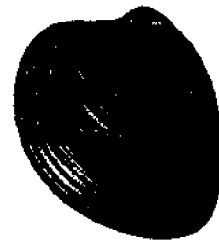
Overwintering

Those who kept their seed in NJ said that they had an acceptable loss, but those who sent seed to South Carolina and put it in shrimp ponds had an almost 100% loss from the rain events that lowered the salinities greatly.

Hatchery Production

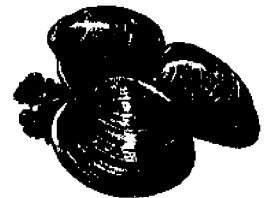
Thankfully, hatchery production was routine. No great losses and no fabulous productions. No brown tide event this year.

Nursery Production



Because of the wet then dry weather, there was poor raceway growth during the first half of the summer until the 3rd week of July when the growth started to move again. By the end of the season the growth was considered average.

There is some concern for the 1999 season that there might be some mortalities from the exposure of silts or contaminants owing to the construction of the new Atlantic City Tunnel. The Tunnel is being installed to allow access to the two new Casinos and runs through the Venice Park section of Atlantic City, where four culture system are located.



Field Growout

Rit Crema, one of the clammers longest involved with clam culture in South Jersey,

said that 1999 spring was the worst growing season he had seen in 23 years, with the lowest salinity ever seen in Dry Bay. He believes with the expansion of Brigantine Inlet there is a bigger draw of water from Great Bay and when the tide floods, this fresher water is going back into Dry Bay.

Slow growth continued until the middle of August and then picked up.

Once again Dry Bay and Absecon Bay had growth spurts in opposition to each other. There was a lot of macroalgae in the bays, especially cabbage (*Ulva lactuca*) and red beard (*Agardiella*). There was also "ribbon grass" (brown with funny edges, like lasagna), snotgrass, and the "psychedelic green stuff." Tape mud did not seem to be a major problem this year.



Markets

There seemed to be more market than production in 1998. Florida clams came into the local market, but it also got shut down from all the rain in the spring. They experienced heavy mortalities in the Cedar Key area. The price dropped one cent in June to \$0.17, probably because of product being shipped into the area. Virginia was delivering clams into the Philadelphia market for \$0.16.



Final Comments and Possible Research

One of the issues that has been discussed for the past two years is whether water that flows past seed in raceways or in upwellers is properly used, or if money spent on pumping is partially wasted. John Kraeuter

from the Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab had done some work at two hatcheries last year that indicated that all the algae was not consumed in one pass, and that it might be possible to re-use some of that water. Connie Des Rocheres from T&M Associates in Middletown, NJ, offered to work with Kraeuter to do an energy audit of an upweller system to look at the process and decide if it might be improved.

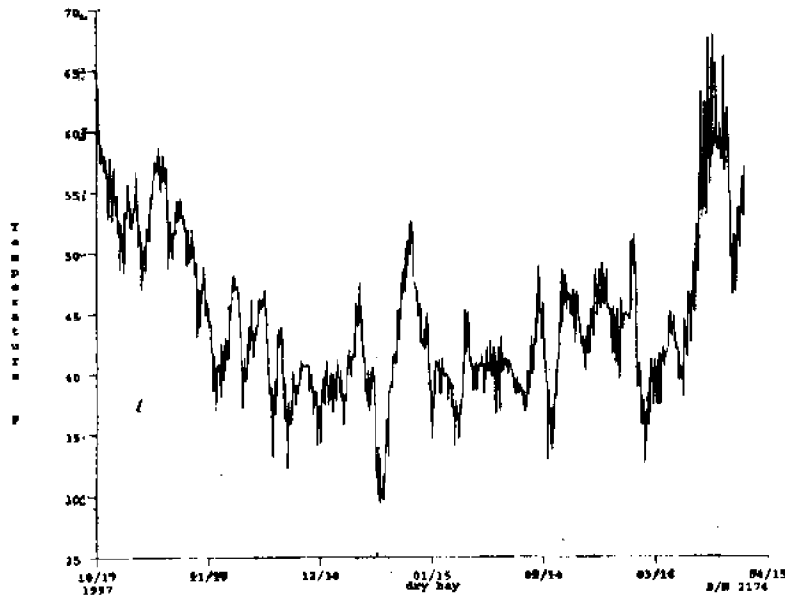
By secret note, those who were present tallied up their production. The total was about 40 million, but one hatchery got on line late and didn't produce field plantable seed. Four hatcheries were not there to report.

Attendees

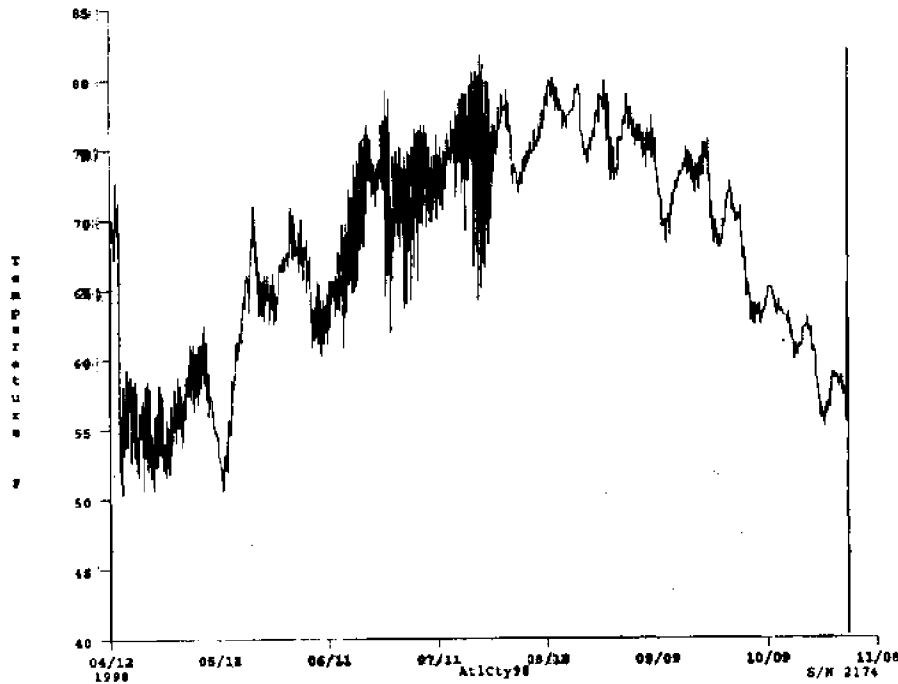
Ray Baer
Mike Botton
Ray Crema
Rit Crema
Arturo Demegillo
Connie Des Rocheres
Robert Fenton
Gef Flimlin
Tom Glenn
John Kraeuter
Brian Kowalski
Steve Mastro
Dale S. Parsons
Santo Rando
Chris Scales
John Schriever
Ollie Twist
Jerry Zodi



Water Temperature in Dry Bay, Winter 1997-1998



Water Temperature at Atlantic City Hatchery, 1998



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