

Seaweed Hub Regulations Work Group

October 18, 2021 Meeting Notes

Hosts/Facilitators: Stephanie Otts and Catherine Janasie, National Sea Grant Law Center

Participants: Olivia Deans, Anoushka Concepcion, Michael Ciaramella, Jennifer Bender, Zachary Klein, Chris Schillaci, Abby Phillips, Gregg Rivara, Steve Kirk, Kristin DeRosia-Banick, Emanuel Hignutt

Agenda:

- *Welcome & Introductions*
- *Seaweed Hub Rules of Engagement (Stephanie)*
- *Other Seaweed Hub Work Group Updates (Anoushka)*
- *Project Highlight - NY Seaweed Task Force (Mike Ciaramella)*
- *Applied Project Funds (Anoushka)*
- *Recap of Previous Discussions (Stephanie)*
- *Brainstorming Next Steps (Group)*

Seaweed Hub Rules of Engagement

- Stephanie provided a brief overview of the Seaweed Hub “Rules of Engagement” which were developed by the Seaweed Hub leadership to serve as a written agreement among the Virtual Work Group members and Sea Grant facilitators on how participants will interact during meetings.
- Cathy and Stephanie requested that each work group member review and complete the code of conduct form: <https://forms.gle/gqhbZ2aSpUXcF6Ab8> by Friday, October 22.

Other Seaweed Hub Work Group Updates

- Production Work Group – held meeting on October 15th
 - The WG will develop a national seaweed nursery list.
 - Participants would like to use applied project funds to support UConn students in compiling and creating the list
 - UConn Cooperative Extension will update and maintain the list annually
 - WG participants determined the criteria to include in the development of the list
 - Examples include: species cultivated, regulatory restrictions, recommended growing conditions and/or locations, other requirements)
 - Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s shellfish hatchery list will serve as a model
 - Will use a list provided by GreenWave as a starting point

- Students will report to the WG as needed
 - UConn will develop the job announcement, interview and supervise students
- Post-harvest and Processing Work Group – next scheduled meeting October 28th.
- Marketing Work Group – next scheduled meeting November 18th

Project Highlight: NY Seaweed Task Force

- New York Sea Grant created the Seaweed Processing and Marketing Task Force in January 2021 to develop a series of resources to assist NY seafood producers in understanding the regulations governing the sale and marketing of seaweed products in New York. The Task Force was made up of various industry, academic, and regulatory agency representatives with control over seaweed production, processing, and sales.
- Task Force is currently developing an interactive pdf that walks you through the avenues that a seaweed farmer can follow to market the product.
- Seaweed is different from seafood because it falls under FSMA in NY.
- The Task Force has been a great opportunity for communication between industry and regulatory agencies.
- Link to the seafood guides that are currently available:
www.nyseagrant.org/seafoodguides

Applied Project Funds

- Part of the overall seaweed hub project is for the work groups to tackle priorities identified in the needs assessment. Want the work groups to work on something together.
- First part of that is to develop a strategy or work plan. Then select some low hanging fruit to work towards the goal.
- Applied project funds are available for the work group. Maximum of \$10,000 available to each work group. Work groups do not need to use them.
 - As mentioned earlier, production work group wanted a nursery list. But needed to pay someone to compile that information and put that list together. They've proposed seeking Applied Project funding to pay UConn students to compile information that industry, regulators, and other stakeholders would need. Will be maintained by Cooperative Extension in future years.
 - Other work groups don't have an idea yet. That's a priority for discussion in the coming months.
- Can't benefit only one company or one state. Has to be of value to the entire group. Can be a seed project that might lay the foundation for larger funding request through another competition or opportunity.
- Work group should develop proposal/idea that will then be submitted to the Steering Committee for review and approval.

- Guidance document:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EBWk_Gr_hWWcn5VEdINHBvGwdlUI8c2R/edit#

Recap of our Previous Discussions

Possible Actions/Strategies to Address Permitting SWOT

1. Developing a tool that identifies what information you need to provide during the application process to address agency questions/concerns or create permitting efficiencies.
 - Would help to support complete applications, address concerns, and save time.
2. Develop stock language proponents can include in application materials, when appropriate, to demonstrate how risk is addressed through project siting and design (i.e. the seasonality of protected turtle species occurrence in New England would largely limit overlap with seasonal kelp structures if structures are deployed after Nov 1.

Possible Actions/Strategies to Address Food Safety SWOT

1. NSGLC working with state regulators on identifying what processes are being used in each state
 - Could also do a simple survey to address
 - Group can be updated once state workshop is created
 - Determine what states treat as seafood as compared to RAC
 - Maybe develop a chart/resource that outlines what states are doing, what analysis looks at to see if comparable to their state
2. Other countries/states for frameworks - NSGLC has done some research on this already that the group could build upon. Can share draft with the group
3. Need clarification for what would be needed to sell across state lines
4. Short document on PC/HACCP comparison

Brainstorming Next Steps

Permitting Possible Next Steps:

- Action/Strategy #1:
 - Tools could vary a lot from state to state. Would this be one tool with variations? Or multiple tools?
 - Could focus on some of the protected species issues on the federal level.

- There may be elements that are the same in every state such as time of year restrictions to avoid sea turtle interactions, etc.
 - For example, using November 1 as an earliest start date because sea turtles will be south of Long island by then.
 - What would something like that look like?
 - Simply making sure that line diameter is identified, overhead graphic, some other very basic things are included in an application to avoid/minimize some of the back and forth between the applicant.
 - Minimum information list or an application template.
 - Corps district in Alaska has one of the more developed examples of something like this.
 - Maybe take it back a step;
 - NOAA protected species are concerned about seasonality, etc.
 - NOAA habitat is concerned about anchors, etc.
- Action/Strategy #2:
 - This is likely covered in the discussion above.
 - Why are we talking about the start date? Why is line tension important?
 - Grower doesn't speak regulatory language and vice versus. Trying to connect those two sides.
- Would be nice to have as a goal to dig into these issues at the state or regional level. Could explore how the federal requirements might vary in the implementation due to differences among the states and districts. Value in having products that provide that detail.

Food Safety Possible Next Steps:

- Value in working towards a seaweed food safety training. From NY perspective, it would need to be a FMSA/PC training.
 - Someone would need to go through the training, so they could be trained in order to offer a “train the trainer” thing.
 - Seaweed training would have to go through a process to be approved, to have seaweed examples. So that it could be offered by the PC Alliance to have
- Using the work group product as a platform to start the conversation.
 - Being able to find others who are interested in developing a seaweed PC training. What's the process for getting something approved and how you actually propose that.
- Action item would be developing a plan for doing this. Identifying or reaching out to others who might be interested in doing this type of training.

- NY Task Force had experience with industry trying to push best practices for product quality into the regulatory guide. NY

Other Items for Discussion

Gregg Rivara shared that Cornell Cooperative Extension-Suffolk will have a seaweed session (moderated by his colleague Steve Schott) at the 2022 Long Island Agriculture Forum on January 27th. It will be a hybrid meeting available via Zoom. Gregg will send the agenda and info on how to attend to Catherine for distribution to this group when finalized.

Next Call:

- The Working Group expressed a preference for quarterly calls. A Doodle poll will be circulated with the notes to schedule our next call in January 2022.
- Agenda items will include discussion of next steps regarding the two priority actions (application template/information list; seaweed PC training), and how to move forward with a possible ask for Applied Project funds.