



# Newsletter

January 05, 2007

## President's Message

Greetings to All!

VHS, a Federal Order and another year for the industry! - Answer

*Question - What are the defining points summarizing aquaculture in Michigan this past year?*

First things first! Bob Baldwin has pointed out that this is the 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of Michigan Fish Farmers/Aquaculture Association. Congratulations to all! Past. Present. And Future.

Many individuals have contributed greatly to the industry over the past few decades. I dare not mention names for I would be surely blameful to leave someone out. However, I do know someone who knows everybody, and I believe that Bob will be talking a little about those early days at our upcoming conference.

Now we move on to... you guessed it...VHS.

The VHS tidal wave has hit and changed the Michigan Aquaculture and Baitfish industries perhaps forever. Not only did the USDA Emergency Order raise a lot of questions about divisions in the National Aquaculture Industry, but it stands to put some industry members out of business. I will say this on record - we are used to storms here in Michigan! And we like challenges. Fellow industry members, the challenges in 2007 are great! Thus we should have a Great Year! As Howard Dean once said: "AHHHHGHGH !!!@!" Seriously though, there is a very important public meeting being held in Romulus MI, 8:30 am on Jan 10, 2007. Please read the proceeding VHS Meeting Commentary.

Last but not least –

Come join us at Michigan Aquaculture 2007 in one month! We'll talk about our challenges and get updated to the extent possible on VHS from a diversity of expert viewpoints. I am certain that all

industries related to aquatic animal production in the Great Lakes Region can take home a hat full.

Happy New Years to all!

See you Feb 6,

Chris Weeks

## VHS PUBLIC MEETING COMMENTARY

Chris Weeks

APHIS is hosting four public meetings on (VHS) at the following locations and dates:

Lakewood, CO	1/9	Romulus, MI	1/10
Memphis, TN	1/9	Coraopolis, PA	1/10

The Romulus Meeting will be at: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Detroit-Metro Airport, 8000 Merriman Road, Romulus, MI. 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Meetings will be public hearing formats, allowing verbal and written public statements. APHIS will provide a short presentation and preside over commentaries. It does not appear that a question and answer period will take place. In short, we have perhaps this single opportunity to provide a short statement on individual interests regarding what APHIS actions to VHS should be. If you wish to read a statement bring 2 copies, one to leave for record. Persons who wish to speak will be asked to sign in with their name and organization/business also for record.

I believe that there will be heavy attendance in Colorado and Memphis. There is a strong possibility that the majority of statements coming from those meetings will be towards tight restrictions. I would not be surprised if zoning and quarantines are mentioned. While not fore planned, regional markets are very, very at stake.

A low attendance at the meetings in the GL region is

a worst case scenario. I therefore encourage as many of you to attend, or provide a written statement, as possible.

I have identified a few items for consideration. They should be considered as hearsay/rumors/opinions, and are only intended to provide food for thought. My viewpoint stems rather from the aquaculture side rather than baitfish. Please correct me if I am getting something wrong, and feel free to provide feedback:

**APHIS may be leaning towards OIE standards only**

Farm/facility basis

150-180 fish samples

2x per year until 2 yr history

frequency in question - may be a change in frequency towards **quarterly**

*Comments: With OIE only (no Blue Book), depopulation events (+ contamination) likely to be on a facility basis and not per lot. Is there a redemption program? Quarterly tests would be costly. Are testing facility capacities and personnel adequate?*

**Potential National VHS zones**

Examples: areas certification required/ not required, quarantine,..

*Comments: Biggest impact likely to baitfish industry. Zones could help the industry or might help destroy it. Be sure to specify what type of zones you feel would work best (if any). Should Great Lakes industries be held to higher standards? Exotic introductions (e.g. zebra mussels) at least in my opinion shows such boundaries do not work very well. How does this affect state import requirements and regional competition?*

**There may be issues concerning certification of testing facilities and laboratory personnel.**

Who approves a laboratory, and is a DVM required (e.g. terrestrial agriculture animals)?

In closing, VHS is a real threat. I have not had an opportunity to review all details of events leading to this point. I also still question whether APHIS has taken the correct action. Regardless, I hope you agree that we must do what we can to protect our natural resources and the industry together. I am confident that if everyone in the region has an equal voice, then the best interest of the region will be represented. For those attending the Romulus meeting I look forward

to seeing you there. If you wish to have a statement hand delivered to the meeting I would be glad to help out. Please feel free to forward this letter as you see fit.

**From the Editor's Desk - Bob Baldwin**

(January 4 & 5 released for comments and should be considered as one of the many possibilities that could be used.)

*With the January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting coming up with APHIS many within the Aquaculture Community have been trying to figure out a direction that would handle our situation and correct some of the past issues. For Discussion - I submit the following for comment:*

**Problem:** Lack of uniform standards, regulations and enforcement between the States concerning Aquaculture Health Issues.

In our quest to find an answer to our question of what will make APHIS and the concerned States happy, have we missed the obvious? USDA-APHIS - works from not only a National viewpoint but also from a Global trade viewpoint. We on the other hand view ourselves from a backyard view instead of a global view. Maybe our astigmatism is worse than we thought and we need to step back a little and see this picture for what it is!

What I have talked about for about the last fifteen years is the need of a uniform regulatory climate of the aquaculture industry. I believe APHIS realizes that previous aquaculture health programs within the US have been greatly lacking when compared to the world (OIE) and our local policies (Blue Book). But, for better or worse, that is what we have had to work with. Now, that the lid has been blown off and everybody is looking into the container many from the outside of our realm are crying fowl - for what they see and smell and they are telling APHIS to take action about VHS expanding threat. For the Great Lakes Community - this is a live or die situation, with the clock ticking for response of a creditable solution.

We need to bring the Great Lakes Aquaculture, Bait industry, State and Federal resources agencies together and speak as one voice.

We must be able to establish a standard uniform code for aquaculture health surveillance and guidelines across the United States and its Territories. We have been worrying about tossing out the “Baby with the Bath Water” for too long and not realizing that we had to first - “Birth the Baby”.

Shouldn't we try to get APHIS to step back for a moment and look at this situation from a different view? The topic of the day, **VHS** (like it or not) is here to stay - but what we all do from this point-on, with our reasoning, actions and animal husbandry guidelines will ultimately determine the fate of the US Aquaculture Industry. I've said it before and I will say it again, the aquaculture industry (whether private, tribal or governmental) are all traveling in the same boat, and if and when this boat should sink, we will all go down with it! Isn't better to not sink the boat in the first place and but keep it afloat?

Let us use our current situation to our benefit instead of our demise.

My proposal for U.S. Aquaculture:

1. National - Implement OIE fish health guidelines nationwide.
2. International shippers: Use OIE guidelines\* (2 cycles per year).
3. Interstate shippers: Use OIE guidelines\* (2 cycles per year).
4. Intrastate shippers: Use a modified OIE version\* (1 cycle per year, unless under quarantine).
5. Standard health documentation forms between States for interstate commerce.
6. Watershed to Watershed Management tools for potential future pathogen threats.
7. Quarantine Watershed: OIE sampling guidelines, government testing subsidy of 100% until quarantine is lifted and the use of an animal indemnification program - when necessary.
8. To include all Private, State/Federal, College/University Research Programs, Tribal and Aquarium Trade - Registered/Licensed Aquaculture Facilities.
9. Create a transitional time frame to be fully implemented (Three years or less)

\*Since this will require a large Federal involvement to establish uniform guidelines between the States and to certify testing laboratories, we will need to ask Congress to help fund the proposed program with implementation of funding sources. We also should support a sliding government funding scale and sunset time frame as a political reality.

Example: Subsidize test funding schedule

Version	Program Years	
	A	B
Funding Share	(Fed%- Private%)	(Fed% - Private%)
1 - 3:	85% / 15%	100% / 0%
4 - 6:	65% / 35%	85% / 15%
7 - 9:	45% / 55%	65% / 35%
10 - 12:	25% / 75%	45% / 55%
13 - 15:	15% / 85%	25% / 75%

What do you think?

Other ideas or plans that you have thought of?

*While I have your attention!*

*Another thought to keep in the back of your head as the process moves along is the requirement of a Economic Impact Study by the Federal or State Agencies proposing any regulatory change. To date, I haven't stumbled across one, has anyone seen one?*

*Testing under the title “Fish Health” is a very expensive and lengthy (time) proposition and if not brought to the attention of our Congressional and State representatives, an agency whether Federal or State could easily collapse an industry by over-regulation zealotry. Cost sharing will be a necessary tool if APHIS and/or the States want a greatly expanded inspection service.*

*Therefore, keep in mind how to pay the bill is just as important as any other part of this discussion. Governmental agencies often forget that their requirements can and have put the private businessmen out of business by overburden, yet the agencies continue to collect their pay on Friday! Or at least until the next budgetary hearing!*

## Election of Officers - February 6th

Office of Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer and Director at Large are open. If you wish to run for office please contact Chris Weeks.

## 2007 Calendar

### January 9 & 10

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services program will host four public meetings to present current information about the outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and actions taken to prevent the spread of this fish disease, and to discuss issues concerning possible regulation of VHS by the Agency.

The meetings will be held in Lakewood, CO, and Memphis, TN, on January 9, 2007, and in Romulus, MI, and Coraopolis, PA, on January 10, 2007. Each meeting will be held from 8:30 a.m. to noon, local time.

The meetings will be held at the following locations:

**Lakewood, CO:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 134 Union Boulevard, 1st Floor Conference Room, Lakewood, CO.

**Memphis, TN:** The Peabody Memphis Hotel, 149 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN.

**Romulus, MI:** Crowne Plaza Hotel, Detroit-Metro Airport, 8000 Merriman Road, Romulus, MI.

**Coraopolis, PA:** Pittsburgh Airport Marriott, 777 Aten Road, Coraopolis, PA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Jill Rolland, Aquaculture Specialist, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 46, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-7727.

### January 19

**Northern Ohio Aquaculture Workshop** - A focus on Baitfish Production - Lake Erie Islands Regional Welcome Center, 770 S.E. Catawba Road Port Clinton, Ohio. For more information please contact Nancy Hansen at 877/668-3472, 419/534-3710 ext 140, or [nancy.hansen@eisc.org](mailto:nancy.hansen@eisc.org) to register with questions. PDF flyer link: <http://www.michiganaquaculture.com/Aqua%20Workshop31.pdf>

### January 19 & 20

**2007 American Heartland Aquaculture Conference** - Rend Lake Resort & Conference Center Whittington, Illinois. For more information on this four State conference please visit the Missouri Aquaculture Association web site at [www.moaa.pond.org](http://www.moaa.pond.org) for details.

### February 6 & 7

**Michigan Aquaculture 2007 & MAA Annual Meeting** will be held at McGuire's Resort Cadillac, Michigan. This year's meeting will be one that you don't want to miss! Annual Meeting information will be available in the January newsletter and at the [www.michiganaquaculture.com](http://www.michiganaquaculture.com) web site.

### February 9

**Ohio Aquaculture Association Annual Meeting and Banquet** at the University Plaza Hotel Conference Center in

Columbus, OH. Meeting Brochure link: <http://www.michiganaquaculture.com/Meeting%20Brochure.pdf>

### February 10 & 11

**North Central Regional Aquaculture Center (NCRAC) Annual Program Planning Meeting** will be held at University Plaza Hotel Conference Center - Columbus, OH. For more information contact either our representative Chris Weeks or Ted Batterson .

## Important Web Resource Contacts:

**Michigan Aquaculture**  
[www.michiganaquaculture.com](http://www.michiganaquaculture.com)

**Great Lakes Fish Health**  
[www.greatlakesfishhealth.com](http://www.greatlakesfishhealth.com)

**Save the Bait Business**  
[www.savethebaitbusiness.com](http://www.savethebaitbusiness.com)

## Join the MAA email discussion listing

If you're hooked up to the internet and not a part of the MAA discussion group your missing out on great discussions and important legislative update information. To register, go to the following site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/michaqua/>

## Aquaculture Interest Column

In every newsletter we would like to add at least one article written by a member of MAA. This could be something about your farm, experiences, concerns you may have, a study you might have done, or just about anything you feel would be worth passing on (aquaculture related please). If you have something you would like to contribute, send a copy to either Bob Baldwin or Chris Weeks.

## Current Officers

President: Chris Weeks 517/353-5453  
Vice President: Bob Baldwin 231/796-2284  
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## Classified Ads

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