

Project Title: Regional Aquaculture Extension Specialist (RAES) [Termination Report]

Total Funds Committed: \$124,993

Initial Project Schedule: September 1, 2016 to August 31, 2018

Current Project Year: September 1, 2016 to June 30, 2019

Participant(s): C. Weeks, Michigan State University, *replaced by M. Smith, Ohio State University*

Extension Liaison: K. Quagraine, Purdue University

Industry Liaison: William Lynch, Mill Creek Perch Farms, Marysville, Ohio

Reason for Termination: Completion of project objectives.

Project Objectives

1. Continue RAES support to the NCRAC Aquaculture Community through ongoing activities in areas of liaison services, leadership, assessing and addressing industry needs and information transfer.
2. Develop and strengthen partnerships from within the NCR and outside the region among regulatory agencies, industry, academia, and other relevant entities to foster open, meaningful dialog on critical issues and build support for the NCR aquaculture industry.
3. Coordinate efforts for seeking non-NCRAC support for NCR aquaculture development.

Deliverables

1. Open door liaison services to the NCR aquaculture community
2. Serve on 3 or more committees and panels as an industry representative
3. Support for, and interaction with, all NCR state aquaculture associations; attendance at 3 or more state association meetings, regional and/or national conferences per year
4. Direct information exchange to over 500 individuals per year through personal communications and site visits
5. Continue information outlet and topical news on the NCR fish culture list -serve and Xtension Ask-an- Expert
6. Annual updates to the NCRAC regulation website
7. Dialogue and information exchange on policy issues (e.g. Federal Register posts, legislation and regulation)
8. Regional aquaculture needs survey (once every 3 years)
9. Establish partnerships for NCR aquaculture industry development, submitting at least one grant proposal per year as a team member for NCR industry support.
10. Assist the Directors office in strategic planning and project selection protocol effectiveness.

Project Summary

The Regional Aquaculture Extension Specialist (RAES) project was initiated in 2008 under an overarching goal of advancing commercial aquaculture in the region. The initial RAES objectives were to provide leadership and enhance information transfer to the aquaculture industry in the North Central Region (NCR). This work plan builds upon outcomes and achievements of RAES activities to date under expanded objectives. Specifically, the RAES has continued to strive to identify industry needs, work with others to develop and implement strategies to address those needs, provide liaison services to industry sectors, disseminate information to industry, public trust agencies and the general public, and develop and strengthen partnerships for sustainable aquaculture development in the NCR.

Technical Summary and Analysis

Chris Weeks resigned from this Michigan State University and the project in January 2018. In the interim, remaining project funds were re-allocated to University of Ohio in 2019; Matt Smith assumed leadership towards the end of the project's schedule duration. This project was taken over by Matt Smith. PI Smith provided support for the NCRAC community, was involved on the National Aquaculture Association's Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) committee, and sought external non-NCRAC funding to support aquaculture advancement in the region.

Prior activities undertaken by Chris Weeks are listed by objective.

Objective 1.— RAES activities over the 2017-18 project period include: NCRAC regulation website update by ISU staff, a region wide survey on concerns regarding risk of aquatic invasive species (AIS), phone and direct personal contact with stakeholders, attendance and presentations at state association and aquaculture development meetings, interviews, and postings to the NCR Fish culture List Serve. Additionally, the RAES obtained funding and was PI on a team to develop a model AIS HACCP verification program for aquaculture and baitfish sectors. The RAES also took lead coordinating roles on steering committees of the 2016 and 2018 North Central Aquaculture Conferences.

Objective 2. — Chris Weeks continued memberships with the National Aquaculture Association, Michigan Farm Bureau, and Coalition for Sustainable Seafood Production (CUSP); served on the Michigan Farm Bureau Aquaculture Advisory Committee, Great Lakes Panel for Aquatic Nuisance Species, NSF Food Division Advisory Council, and various funding review panels; worked with MN and MI DNR agencies, and the Nature Conservancy on AIS HACCP verification programs; and provided interaction with, and presentations to, the National Soybean Council, 4H, and Michigan Environmental Health Association.

The RAES also served as co-PI on NCRAC projects including leadership training for NCR state aquaculture associations, NCRAC Base Extension, and as extension liaison for the NCRAC Comprehensive Outreach and Training project. Additionally, the RAES has provided support to regional programs such as Aquaculture Boot Camp (Ohio), the Minnesota Aquaculture Workshop, and Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers (CSIF).

Objective 3. — The RAES, over the course of the project, has been awarded \$347,000 from non-NCRAC sources to support regional aquaculture growth as PI and an additional \$456,840 as co-PI.

Principal Accomplishments

Objective 1. — Participated in regional/national work as applicable and assisted the NCRAC community by presenting and networking to enhance the nation's knowledge of aquaculture production in the Midwest.

Objective 2. — Committee member of the National Aquaculture Association ANS committee. Participation in NOAA Sea Grant panels to express the necessity of further aquaculture support in the NCR.

Objective 3. — Submitted proposals, unsuccessfully, for non-NCRAC support for regional development.

Impacts

The RAES has gained a reputation as a go to information source, and as an industry liaison on regulatory and AIS matters. The RAES is often asked to help clarify legal, biological, environmental, business development and facility design questions, and asked repeatedly to present on these types of issues at meetings and conferences. Through this funding, water quality supplies were obtained that have already been utilized during other workshops which helps transfer the technology of water science to the community.

Recommended Follow-up Activities

NCRAC should summarize the Extension programs and the deliverables from the RAES projects in manner that illustrates on the importance of regional aquaculture work to North Central universities.

Publications, Manuscripts, Workshops, and Conferences

See the Appendix for a cumulative output for all NCRAC-funded Extension activities.