



Welcome to the first issue of the renewed North Central Regional Aquaculture Center (NCRAC) Newsletter – Fin Clips. This will be an on-line newsletter that will present activities and issues related to NCRAC. As many of you probably already know, NCRAC is one of five Regional Aquaculture Centers (RACs) administered by United States Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). As with all RAC programs, NCRAC projects are driven by needs of the aquaculture community in the 12-state North Central Region. Expected outcomes and anticipated benefits for each of the Center-funded projects are presented in annual reports. These reports, as well as the project proposals, are posted on the Center’s Web site at <http://www.ncrac.org/>.

The North Central Regional Aquaculture Center is an administrative unit that relies on leaders in the aquaculture industry through an Industry Advisory Council (IAC) for direction in its programs. The IAC membership consists of individuals identified by state aquaculture associations and six individuals selected by the NCRAC Board to represent the region wide aquaculture industry. A Technical Committee of Research and Extension (TC/R and TC/E respectively) works with the IAC to formulate programs on priorities. Members of the TC/R and TC/E are nominated by regional contacts and then selected by the NCRAC Board of Directors. Teams of aquaculture specialists from Midwest universities, public agencies, and the private sector develop and implement projects to solve priority problems. Regional programs are meshed with activities of other centers to avoid duplication.

Since inception in 1988, NCRAC has concentrated on cultivating regional food-fish species, e.g., bluegill and largemouth bass (sunfish), walleye, and yellow perch. NCRAC-funded projects have: 1) provided needed culture technology information for identified culture species for the region; 2) provided needed information regarding viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) and aquatic invasive species (AIS) to the aquaculture industry through workshops and materials; 3) provided leadership on fish health issues through support of projects that investigate new animal drugs; 4) developed needed information for fish feeds; 5) developed and maintain a web site for state import regulations; and 6) provided extension and outreach materials for the aquaculture industry.

In the 30 years of NCRAC's existence there have been a number of changes in personnel and program, as well as a change in host institution for the Center; Iowa State University became the lead institution in January 2012 with the retirement of Ted Batterson at Michigan State University. Recent personnel changes include resignations of regional extension staff, D. Allen Pattillo (Iowa State University) and Chris Weeks (Michigan State University). My sincere best wishes to both as they pursue other professional opportunities. The current staff include Director (Joe Morris), Administrative Specialist II (Denise Birney) and Stephen Grausgruber (graduate student – extension).

In December 2015 a strategy meeting was held in Ames, Iowa, to strategize NCRAC programming for the following 5 years. The NCRAC Board created a new process for developing multi-year projects (Request for Proposal [RFP] program that addresses a list of industry issues) and a short-term project program (Rapid Response Projects [RRP]) to address time-sensitive issues in the commercial aquaculture industry. In 2017 four 1-year RRP projects were completed as Rapid Response Projects; two 1-year RRP projects were initiated in 2018. Topics covered in 2017 and 2018 RRP program include, in part, youth education in aquaculture, status of aquaculture associations in the region, and use of alternative management techniques in pond-reared yellow perch culture. The RRP program is currently undergoing modifications with the final program being released in 2019.

At this time the Center is now reviewing eight proposals that were accepted for development as full research projects submitted under the current RFP ([https://www.ncrac.org/files/page/files/rfp2019\\_ncrac\\_preproposal\\_final.pdf](https://www.ncrac.org/files/page/files/rfp2019_ncrac_preproposal_final.pdf)). The decision to select which of these eight projects for submission to USDA-NIFA will be made in the 2019 NCRAC annual meeting.

Along with these changes came a revision in the general schedule for the Center. Instead of annual NCRAC conferences where topics are discussed and decisions are made regarding new projects on specific issues, the Center now considers projects on a 2-year basis. In even numbered years, there is a regional aquaculture conference hosted in the region with the goal of engaging more industry members with regional extension and research contacts. In 2014 the North Central Aquaculture Conference was held in Toledo, Ohio and was well received by the 375+ attendees. The 2016 conference was hosted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (200+attendees) was followed in 2018 in Kansas City, Missouri (115 attendees). In all three regional conferences the attendees indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the information presented and considered the meetings to be a high value. Presentations from these conferences can be found at <https://www.ncrac.org/presentations>. The Center is now seeking proposals from regional associations to host the 2020 North Central Aquaculture Conference. If you are part of the NCRAC community and received this request from the Center, please feel free to distribute it to interested groups in the region.

The North Central Regional Aquaculture Center developed a new Vimeo channel for the dissemination of aquaculture research, education, and extension videos. The NCRAC Vimeo channel can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/channels/958980/127639646>. Videos include “Feeding Yellow Perch Fry” and “Growing & Maintaining Natural Feeds for Yellow Perch Fry” as well as videos associated with the webinar series that was developed in partnership with National Aquaculture Association and the U.S. Aquaculture Society.

Since the early days of the Center, the Extension contacts have worked to develop suitable publications for the aquaculture industry. In 2016 a group of extension, research and industry met to discuss updating current publications and to develop a list of new publications to be developed. At this time, identified authors are working on nine new publications for the Center.

For those interested in aquaponics, the Center has developed a list of regional aquaculture information on the subject (see [https://www.ncrac.org/files/news/files/regional\\_extension\\_information- aquaponics.pdf](https://www.ncrac.org/files/news/files/regional_extension_information- aquaponics.pdf)). This list includes the two most publications by Allen Pattillo that were developed for Iowa State University Extension as well as publications and videos from the Southern Regional Aquaculture Center.

On November 14, 2017, the 2017 Iowa Aquaculture Conference took place in Ames, Iowa. As in the 2016 conference, this meeting was well attended by both current and prospective aquaculturists; 250 attendees in 2017. This meeting is an excellent example of regional partnerships to address public interests in aquaculture, i.e., a regional non-governmental organization (Coalition to Support Iowa’s Farmers), public university (Iowa State University), and NCRAC. Talks from both the 2014, 2016 and 2017 conferences can be found at <http://www.supportfarmers.com/programs/aquaculture-conference-2016> and <http://www.supportfarmers.com/programs/aquaculture-conference-2017>, respectively. This meeting was followed by a regional workshop on NCRAC Leadership Training hosted by Carole Engle.

In an effort to wade into social media I now have a twitter account (@NCRAC\_Director). As I am new to this technology my tweets are limited at this time but I will work on developing new ones as the need arises.

If you have any questions about NCRAC or want information on aquaculture please do not hesitate to call my office at 515-294-5280.

Sincerely,



Joseph E. Morris, Director