

**N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries – Habitat and Enhancement  
Shellfish Lease and Aquaculture Program – Public Hearing**

*March 29, 2023*

*Present:* Owen Mulvey-McFerron – Program Coordinator, Shellfish Lease Program  
Teri Dane – Shellfish Lease Biologist  
Greg Allen – Staff (Manteo)  
Elizabeth McCormick – Staff  
Stephen Johnson – Staff  
Dustin Walters – Staff  
Anthony Frost - Staff  
Scottie Tripp – Staff  
George Stilson – Staff  
Robert Farnell - Staff

*Attendees:*

Mary Ellen Allen, Charles VanSalisbury, Ryan Bell, Dylan Bennink, Corey Davis (via WebEx/phone) Richard Carraway, James Clower, Paige Brasington  
*Meeting:* 29 March 2023, 6:00-6:09 PM via in Person for Hyde County proposed shellfish leases. Location at Hyde Government Center, 30 Oyster Creek Road, Swan Quarter  
*Applicant(s):* Ocracoke Salt Company, LLC, Dylan L. Bennink, Carraway Oyster Company, LLC, Richard A. Carraway, Ryan Bell, Mary Ellen Allen

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**I. Meeting**

At 6:00 pm the public hearing was called to order by Owen Mulvey-McFerron:

“I’d like to call this Shellfish Lease Public Hearing to order. My name is Owen Mulvey-McFerron, and I am the Shellfish Lease and Aquaculture Program Coordinator of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. I will be serving as the hearing officer tonight.

The purpose of this public hearing is to receive public comment on proposed shellfish leases in Hyde County. Site investigations by Division staff have determined that these proposed shellfish leases generally meet the standards for shellfish leasing under NC General Statutes and NC Marine Fisheries Commission rules. The director of the Division has authorized this hearing to receive public comment.

Tonight’s hearing is also being conducted virtually, so we have folks participating by telephone and through the WebEx virtual meeting application. PowerPoint slides presented tonight are also available on the Division’s website for those participating by telephone.

This hearing is being recorded and is a public record. All verbal comments, or written communications between members of the public body regarding the transaction of business during this meeting are deemed public record. This hearing is a formalized process where we only take public comment on the proposed shellfish leases that have been noticed in the

Coastland Times Newspaper on February 26<sup>th</sup>, and March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and on the Division's website. No decisions will be made at tonight's hearing. This hearing is also not a dialogue or forum. Any discussion or discourse should be held until after the hearing concludes. Written comments on these shellfish leases can be submitted to the Division up to 5pm tomorrow evening. If you wish to speak tonight and have not already registered on the speakers list, you will get a chance to speak after we have gone through the registered speakers. Now we will do a roll call for folks participating on Webex or by phone. Please be advised, again, everything is being recorded. Teri has been taking attendance as people have signed in and she will finalize that and go over information on how to participate."

**Teri Dane:** "Thanks Owen. Paige Brasington, would you like to speak tonight?" (Ms. Brasington declined to speak.) That is all I am seeing who signed as of this moment. Later in the meeting I will go down the list of those who . . . there has been nobody that indicated that they wanted to speak, but if you do change your mind, later, I have posted in the chat how to raise your hand. If at that time you choose to do that, you can. I turn it back over to you Owen."

Post in chat:

*If you are attending this meeting online on a regular computer, you raise your hand by clicking on the little hand icon at the bottom of the Participants panel. If the Participants panel is not up on your screen, look for an icon of a person – it may be at the bottom or top of your screen, and click on it. That should bring up the Participants panel.*

*If you are attending online with a mobile device, such as a smart phone, you'll need to click on the three little dots and then the hand icon.*

*Either way, once you have finished speaking, you will need to click on the hand icon again to lower your hand.*

**Owen:** "Alright thanks, Teri. So, first, I'm gonna go through information for the proposed shellfish leases, and then I'll give each lease applicants an opportunity to speak. After that I will open comments to anyone else who wants to be heard. I will call on commentators by name in the order they signed up to speak. So, with that, let's get started on the information about the proposed shellfish leases: First we have a 1.46-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, by Ocracoke Salt Company, LLC, agent Dylan Bennink, located East of Bluff to Long Shoal. The management plan indicates the use of floating and bottom gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero submerged aquatic vegetation, which I will refer to as SAV.

Next, we have a 5.69-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, by Carraway Oyster Company, LLC, agent Richard Carraway, located in Abel Bay. The management plan indicates the use of floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Next, we have a 0.78-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, by Ryan Bell, located near Caffee Bay. The management plan indicates the use of cultch,

floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Last, a 2.05-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, by Mary Ellen Allen, located in Back Creek. The management plan indicates the use of bottom and floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Now, I will call on the applicants and give them an opportunity, if they wish to speak, to their proposed shellfish lease. This is not a requirement of the applicants. You will have three minutes to speak. I will hold up one finger when you have one minute remaining, and my hand when you reach three minutes. As a reminder for all speakers this evening, please be courteous and respectful. If you are discourteous or disruptive, I will ask you to leave. First, I'll call on Dylan Bennink to present their proposed shellfish lease."

**Dylan Bennink:** "No comment"

**Owen:** "All right. Perfect. And if you do have some comment. We are a relatively small group tonight. That mic sitting on the table we can pass that around and remain in our seats since we are all pretty close. So next I'll call on a Richard Carraway to present on their proposed shellfish lease."

**Richard Carraway:** "Yeah, my name is Richard Carraway, with Carraway Oyster Company. I'll be working out of Pamlico Beach, right across the Pungo. Planning on starting out as doing this part time and hopefully moving into full time. That's it, thank you."

**Owen:** "All right. Thank you, Richard. Next, I'll call on Ryan Bell to present on their proposed shellfish lease."

**Ryan Bell:** "No comment."

**Owen:** "All right. And lastly, I'll call on Mary Ellen Allen to present their proposed shellfish lease."

**Mary Ellen Allen:** "I really love doing it and I'm excited to get my own place, if I get it hopefully. We will be using floating bags on the lease. Otherwise, just excited about it, I've learned a lot. Thank you."

### Raising Your Hand

*If you are calling in to the meeting by telephone only you can raise your hand by dialing \*3. To lower your hand, you will need to hit \*3 again.*

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**Owen:** “Alright, thank you. Now we will move to comments from the public. When I call your name, please come to the chair or we can just pass the microphone around, state your name, the organization you are representing, where you are from, which lease or leases you are commenting on, and your comments. Please direct your comments to me, as the representative of the Division, and not the audience. Your comments are being recorded through the microphone so be sure to speak clearly into it so we are able to accurately transcribe your remarks. As a reminder, you will have three minutes to speak. If anyone has any questions at any point, I will be hanging around after the meeting and happy to answer those.

We have our speakers list. First, we have Mary Ellen Allen [declines to speak further]. We shall move. Next, I've got Charles VanSalisbury.”

**Charles VanSalisbury:** “It's a positive thing for everybody, the environment, the fisheries. I'm all for it. Not just hers, everybody's lease, I think we need more of 'em. That's it, a positive thing.”

**Owen:** [Unintelligible name and response] and Dylan Bennink.

**Dylan Bennink:** “Dylan Bennink, Ocracoke Salt Company, I just want to say that I think these oyster farms are nothing but good for the environment that they are located in as well as the economy of the state and their localities. That's all I gotta say.”

**Owen:** “Is there anybody else who I didn't call out who would like to speak this evening? Teri is there anybody online that is indicated that they would like to speak?”

**Teri:** “Nope. Nobody has raised their hand from my posting of instructions on how to do that.

**Owen:** “Alrighty, that keeps things relatively straight forward. If no one else wishes to speak, I will close this public hearing. I would like to thank you for your time and participation in the process. The time of closure is 6:09 pm.”

**Closure: 6:09 P.M.**