

# SRBC To Meet, Adopt Aquatic Species Policy

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Lancaster Farming Staff  
HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) is to meet 9 a.m., Jan. 12, at the Radisson-Penn Harris Hotel and Convention Center in Camp Hill, and is expected to adopt a policy for the control of non-indigenous aquatic species into the Susquehanna River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

The two-pronged policy — one set of policy rules for the intentional, first-time introduction; another for the unintentional — is being sought because of problems associated with unwanted aquatic life which can introduce disease, or displace current species.

The policy is really the adoption of a biosecurity measure that is being sought, ultimately, for the entire region and all watersheds feeding into the Chesapeake Bay.

Such problems include the zebra clam which can clog water uptake or discharge valves, such as the ones associated with power plants. However, there are many incidents of undesirable foreign species

being introduced into waters causing environmental and economic problems.

For aquaculturalists, the policy could mean new rules and regulations surrounding the importation, raising, breeding, and disposal of aquatic species.

However, according to the policy, it is for "first-time introductions of non-indigenous, non-naturalized aquatic species. Birds, mammals and other organisms, including marsh-dwellers, that live on land or in the soil are not included in the scope of this policy."

Furthermore, under the actual policy's review process for intentional first-time introductions, "All species currently approved for aquaculture or stocking and the conditions under which each may be cultured or stocked at the present time in each jurisdiction will be considered as approved under the policy for that jurisdiction."

According to Gerald Hollowell, chief of water quality and monitoring division for the SRBC, the impact of the policy may require

some changes to how aquaculturalists operate with exotic species, or new breeds, and pet store operators and dealers of live aquatic species may be required to seek additional approvals before being allowed to import an exotic species not currently approved, but he said he didn't really expect the policy to have much of an impact on commercial production aquaculture.

According to a news release from the SRBC, which is a federal-interstate compact headquartered along Front Street in Harrisburg, the adoption of the "Chesapeake Bay Policy for the Introduction of Non-Indigenous Aquatic Species" into the SRBC's comprehensive plan, is among several items on the agency's agenda.

The four-member SRBC consists of the heads of the environmental agencies for New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland or an appointed alternate, and the U.S. secretary of the interior, or an appointed alternate.

In-short, its mission is to assure safe, clean, reliable flows of water throughout the basin of the Susquehanna River through proper management.

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a project of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and various private and public state agencies to help protect the water and aquatic environment of the bay.

As of December 1993, the policy under consideration was adopted by the Chesapeake Bay Program, and was signed by the governors of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the representative for the District of Columbia, and by a representative of the Chesapeake Bay Commission.

The Chesapeake Bay Commission is a separate interstate legislative compact of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, with the mission to coordinate (and influ-

ence) policy and advise different agencies on public policy issues pertaining to the Chesapeake.

It is one of the six signatories to the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement which set up goals of nutrient reduction into the bay.

The policy that the SRBC is to consider for adoption was created by a subcommittee of the Chesapeake Bay Program and is consistent with the urging of the Chesapeake Bay Commission which has stated that such issues should be managed regionally, rather than locally or by species.

The policy statement, which is an overview of specific policy, states:

*It shall be the policy of the jurisdictions in the Chesapeake Bay basin to oppose the first-time introduction of any non-indigenous aquatic species into the unconfined waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries for*

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