



Wisconsin Aquaculture Association, Inc.

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20th Annual Wisconsin Aquaculture Conference Brings Together Farmers and Researchers, Honors Two University of Wisconsin Employees

The Twentieth Annual 2015 Wisconsin Aquaculture Conference held in Marshfield, Wisconsin on March 6-7th was a great success. Over 140 attendees from Wisconsin, Idaho, West Virginia, Indiana, Colorado and Canada came to held speakers on a wide variety of aquaculture talks. Secretaries Ben Brancel, DATCP, and Kathy Stepp, DNR, along with Senator Petrowski opened the conference with remarks about how important the aquaculture industry is to Wisconsin and gave overviews about the budget and partnership programs. Earlier, Senator Tiffany had met with industry leaders on Thursday to assess their needs and funding concerns.

The theme of the conference was “Wisconsin Aquaculture: Filling Lakes and Plates”. There were over twenty speakers covering main topics including the Walleye Initiative Program, Coolwater Fish Culture, Trout Culture, Aquaponics, Bait Industry and the “Best of Seafood” – a nationally presented nutrition and awareness program. The conference brought together fish farmers together with researchers, vendors, government officials and people wanting information on how to start an aquaculture/aquaponic venture. The Friday opening session highlighted the success of the partnership between DNR, Wisconsin tribes and private industry brought about due to the Walleye Initiative. Using grants funded by the Initiative, expanded rearing capacity has been initiated, allowing the state to increase walleye stocking. This partnership will provide great benefits to the tourism industry and fishermen in Wisconsin for many years.

One of the conference highlights is always the Taste of Wisconsin Aquaculture Cooking Demonstration with renowned chef Dani Klontz from Idaho. This year included a filleting demonstration by fish farmers and a retail product showcase presenting dozens of Wisconsin farm raised added value products. Chef Dani and invited chefs provided over 18 different dishes utilizing farm raised fish from Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Aquaculture Association also recognized two University of Wisconsin employees for outstanding work. Jim Held, UW-Extension Aquaculture Outreach Specialist, was awarded the Aquaculture hall of Fame “Winton Award” for a “lifetime of sustained and distinguished service to Wisconsin Aquaculture”. Jim has worked a total of 27 years helping the Wisconsin aquaculture industry - 19 years as a researcher with UW-Madison CALS and eight years with UW-Extension. His specialty has been assisting farmers with pond management, yellow perch and walleye research, and developing economic models. Dave Gollon, WAA Past President, said, “Without Jim, Wisconsin aquaculture would still be in the dark ages, he has provided the industry with valuable insights and low tech solutions when solving our problems.” WAA also awarded Dr. Chris Hartleb, UW-Stevens Point Fisheries Biologist and NADF Director, with the Aquaculture Education Award in “appreciation for excellent service and assistance to the Wisconsin Aquaculture Industry”. Dr. Hartleb was recognized for his educational work at UW-Stevens Point including authorship of over 50 scientific papers on aquaculture, co-authoring the book on Aquaculture Best Management Practices and the Online Veterinarian

fish health course. He has also instituted an aquaculture minor and aquaponic classes, bringing into the university \$3.3 million in aquaculture grants which has provided funding for the UW-Extension Aquaculture Program and was the winner of the 2015 UW-System Regent Scholar award (1 of 5 awardees in the state) for helping business and industry. Dan Gruendemann, WAA Chairman of the Board, said, “Dr. Hartleb is an extremely valuable asset for Wisconsin fish farmers and due to him, my farm was able to secure a SBIR grant for raising walleyes and saugeye.” WAA is proud to have these university employees working with the industry and helping it grow.

In 2016, WAA will host a North Central Aquaculture Conference in conjunction with the North Central Regional Aquaculture Center (NCRAC), in Madison tentatively set for March 5-6th. This regional conference is expected to draw over 250 fish farmers, aquaculture researchers and speakers from the twelve state region.

For any additional information concerning WAA or the conference please contact Cindy Johnson at cindy@wisconsinaquaculture.com



l-r, Dave Gollon, Past WAA President; Jim Held, UW-Extension Aquaculture Specialist; Dr. Chris Hartleb, UW-Stevens Point