

Editor's Note

During the week of October 16, 2005 I attended the AquaNet V meeting in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada where I was honored to have the opportunity to present what was called the "Distinguished Lecture." (AquaNet may drop the Distinguished part of the title in future years after my presentation, but that is not the point of this editorial.)

AquaNet is one of 21 Networks of Centres of Excellence that were established several years ago to "mobilize Canada's research talent in universities, industry and government to create new economy jobs, stimulate growth and improve the quality of life for Canadians." AquaNet represents the aquaculture sector and is a network of centers that span Canada. Its administrative location is in St John's, Newfoundland and the Office of the Executive Scientific Director is in West Vancouver, British Columbia, all the way across the continent of North America.

Returning to Victoria, which is located on Vancouver Island a short distance north of Seattle, Washington across the United States/Canada border and only a 30-minute small plane ride, brought back fond memories of times I had spent in that lovely city several years ago. The splendor of the fall leaves added to the beauty of the city and to the background

noise as workers with leaf blowers attempted to stay ahead of the prodigious leaf fall.

AquaNet operates a competitive research program through universities across Canada. Funded projects include both marine and freshwater aquaculture. Many studies incorporate industry partners and there is a heavy emphasis on student involvement. The focus of the Victoria meeting was entirely on students.

Tuesday, October 18 was devoted to two workshops for the students. During the morning, the topic was sustainable aquaculture. Experts representing provincial government, the print medium, academia, a nongovernmental organization and industry each spoke for about 15 minutes and then took questions from the audience of approximately 40 students, along with some individuals representing AquaNet leadership.

In the afternoon the students broke into two groups, each of which was asked to critique a published paper that they had been given in advance. One of the papers was a review that addressed the question of whether the incidence of diseases in marine organisms has been increasing in recent years. The other dealt with the incidence of sea lice in wild salmon and the transmission of sea lice from farmed to

wild salmon which is currently the center of considerable controversy, particularly on the west coast of North America.. The students had some very insightful comments with respect to deficiencies that they perceived with respect to each paper.

On Wednesday and Thursday, presentations on the results of studies supported by AquaNet were made, both orally and in posters. In virtually every case, the senior author was a graduate student. Both types of presentations were very professional and it was a pleasure to see the quality of students being supported by the AquaNet program. The program is obviously doing an excellent job of producing aquaculture scientists who will be at the cutting edge of research during their careers.

Presentations were divided into the following subject areas: Alternate Species and Nutrition, Environmental Assessment, Shellfish and Integrated Aquaculture, Fish Health and Welfare, and Public Perceptions/Organic Aquaculture.

My lecture, entitled "Salmon Tales," was presented on Wednesday morning. I talked about the history of salmon culture, emphasizing the development of stocking U.S. waters with salmon beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. I also talked about salmon recovery efforts in Maine and the development of the offshore aquaculture industry. A keynote address by Donald Rix, M.D. was presented Thursday morning. Rix's presentation was entitled: "Marine Biotechnology (Don't be Afraid to Get Involved.)" He had a couple of others with him during his allotted time, one of whom presented information on some very interesting novel organisms that may hold promise as sources of such things as highly unsaturated fatty acids. The other individual discussed funding sources for biotechnological research.

Thursday afternoon, following the last session, the students competed in a dragon boat race (no dragons were injured in the conduct of that race, by the way.) After nearly hitting a docked purse seiner, dodging pleasure boats, float planes and at least one tugboat, the stalwart mariners had become sufficiently proficient at paddling the two dragon boats across Victoria Harbor, and the race was on. It appeared that a good time was had by all, with the exception of one student non-participant whose digital camera took a dive into the water of the Victoria harbor and now rests on the bottom among the benthic organisms.

A student field trip was scheduled for Friday. As a student of aquaculture, it was a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to participate in the field trip. A bus took us to a facil-



The competing dragon boats head across Victoria Harbor.

ity where Manila clams are depurated after being collected from bottom areas that are contaminated with coliform bacteria. After 48 hrs of depuration in sterilized sea water the clams are certified as being free of the bacteria and can be sold for consumption. The facility also shucks, packs and distributes Pacific oysters.

We next visited an oyster raft culture facility operated by a young man who obviously is at the forefront of oyster culture in British Columbia. He indicated that he currently owns and operates four farms and produces large numbers of Pacific oysters annually. He also operates a processing plant and purchases oysters from other growers. Baskets of oysters are suspended from the rafts at two different depths to allow all the animals access to food.

The government of Canada has elected to discontinue funding of AquaNet, except for funding for students that will continue through 2006. The AquaNet board convened during the week to discuss alternative sources of fund-

ing. Given the excellence of the program as demonstrated by the excellent research that is being conducted and the importance of the research to aquaculture development in Canada, it seems to be imperative that AquaNet in some form continues. What AquaNet will become in the future is unclear, but it is clearly making important contributions to the science and technology. I will look forward to seeing it continue in one form or another and applaud the concept and the dedicated people who are involved and dedicated to continuing the enterprise.

— Robert R. Stickney
Editor-in-Chief



Jay Parsons (left) presents Robert Stickney with an AquaNet Distinguished Lecturer plaque. (photo courtesy of AquaNet)