

North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

Division of Marine Fisheries

Habitat and Enhancement Section

Shellfish Lease and Aquaculture Program

Onslow County Shellfish Lease Hearing

Wednesday, August 28, 2024

6:00 PM — 6:49 PM

In-person and Via Webex

Holly Ridge Community Center

404 Sound Rd, Holly Ridge, NC 28445

Attendees

Staff

Zach Harrison, Section Chief

In-person

Marla Chuffo, Administrative Officer II

In-person

Mitch Melkonian, Administrative Specialist I

In-person

Stephen Johnson, Biologist I

In-person

Kristina Flanigan, Conservation Biologist I

In-person

Tina Moore, Southern District Manager

Via Webex

Robert Tripp, Environmental Tech II

Via Webex

Robert Farnell, Environmental Tech I

Via Webex

Applicants

Shawn Burns, 23-046BL/23-047WC

In-person

Thomas Cannon, 23-015BL/23-016WC; 23-024BL/23-025WC

Absent

Benjamin Davey, 23-018BL/23-019WC

Via Webex

James Hammock; Sarah Zajovits, 23-050BL/23-051WC

Absent

In-person

Michael Linz, Jr., 23-006BL/23-007WC

Via Webex

General Public

In-person

Raymond Brittain
Kimberly Brownfield
Sherry Fayer-Burns
Rick Grant
Casey Jones
Michael MacNair
Chris Matteo
Henry Murray
Michael Oppeguard
Joseph Palitti
Lee Parsons
Brittani Reed
Eustace Wood
Sarah Zajovits

Via Webex

TJ Chafatelli
Daniel Cheshire
Ben Creamer
Justin Davey
Erin Fleckenstein
Cole Grady
Megan Swain
Andrew Wells
Alissa Wilson

Transcript

Hearing Officer

Zach Harrison, Habitat and Enhancement Section Chief

Time of Commencement

6:00 PM

1. Opening Remarks

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“The time is six o’clock and I would like to call this Shellfish Lease Public Hearing to order. My name is Zach Harrison, and I am the Habitat and Enhancement Section Chief 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 comments on proposed shellfish leases in Onslow County. Site investigations by division staff have determined that these proposed shellfish leases generally meet the standards for shellfish leasing under North Carolina General Statutes and North Carolina Marine Fisheries Commission rules. The director of the division authorizes a public hearing for proposed shellfish leases that likely meet all standards for shellfish leasing or for proposed shellfish leases that it is unclear if they meet all standards for shellfish leasing. 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 take only public comment on the proposed shellfish leases that have been noticed in the Jacksonville Daily News Newspaper on July 23rd and August 3rd, 2024, 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 by 5pm tomorrow.

If you wish to speak tonight and are not already 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 of the folks participating on Webex or by phone. Please be advised, all participants will be recorded. Stephen has been taking attendance as people have signed into the meeting. He will now finalize that and go over the information on how to participate."

2. Roll Call/Attendance

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

"Okay, can everybody hear me? Okay, I have, there's a list of people, Alissa Wilson, would you like to speak? If you would, I will unmute you and you can respond."

Alissa Wilson, General Public Attendee

"No, thank you."

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

“Okay, we have Ben Creamer. Would you like to speak, and I'll unmute you. I'm not getting any response. We have Benjamin Davey and Mike Linz with the lease applicants that have, I guess if they want to speak, they could also raise their hands, or I can unmute you.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Okay, it looks like Benjamin Davey would like to speak, when we get to that part.”

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

“Okay, and Michael, would you like to speak?”

Michael Linz, Lease Applicant

“I will potentially be speaking later on.”

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

“I have a Megan Swain. I've unmuted you or I've requested for you to unmute. Can you, if you would respond, please, and let me know if you'd like to speak. I did not hear any response there. I think that's everybody other than staff. I have posted instructions in the chat for anybody that would like to raise their hand and potentially speak.”

3. Presentation of Evidence/Statements

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Before beginning the Public Hearing, I will first give a quick overview of the shellfish leasing process and the goal of public comments.

Some shellfish lease basics. Shellfish leases are public trust water leased for shellfish aquaculture. When we say aquaculture, we mean artificially propagated stocks. That means they're reared in a controlled environment. And so those leases give specifically private rights to shellfish in that area. The water is still considered navigable at your own risk.

Shellfish leases are governed by law, and so the majority of what outlined shellfish leases is in general statutes. And so that makes up the largest portion of what to find shellfish leases. There are some that are also defined in marine fisheries commission rules, and lastly in the director's decision. And so those shellfish lease general statutes are NCGS Chapter 113 Article 16, and that includes all the changes to shellfish leases. And there have been quite a bit of changes including 20 succession loss since 1997. So, for the shellfish lease application process, this is a fairly large process, which includes us.

Alright, so this is a shellfish lease process. There's a lot that goes into it. We are currently at this set of public comments, so we have a 30-day public comment period, and we have put out two legal notices, and this is our, of course, public hearing.

For the shellfish lease investigation that's already occurred, the technicians that go out are looking primarily at the marking poles and the acreage to make sure that the proper location and the acreage is correct. They are also looking at the biological pieces, so sampling submerge aquatic vegetation, sea grass, otherwise known as SAV, and natural shellfish to abide by the requirements in general statutes and also the requirements of the United States Army Corp of Engineers. And so when we go out to a shellfish lease site, here is a proposed site and those dots, all those little dots are the samples that are taken for submerged product vegetation and natural shellfish. We do so with meter-wide patent tongs to take grabs to get not only what is on the surface but what could be below including clams or rise ones for those submerged product vegetation. And lastly, the technicians are looking at navigation in depth, so they are taking a snapshot of the location at that time. They are not trying to characterize any other public trust usage in that area by looking at one day.

For the public comments period, we're doing this to evaluate the compatibility of a shellfish lease. We're trying to determine the effects of public trust usage by the shellfish lease and the direct impacts. This public hearing is not a vote, but a way to gather information on those direct impacts. The public comment is then collected, and that includes comments tonight at the public hearing as well as online and letters during the public comment period, which ends again tomorrow at 5:00 PM. We also do additional outreach including posting these on our websites. We have a shellfish leasing tool where you can see exactly where those leases stand. We put our press releases, proclamations, social media posts etc. And so when the director goes to decide on a shellfish lease, the director at this point is weighing the compatibility with public trust usage. And so those are looking at things that are public trust rights in the United States or sorry, in the North Carolina constitution, which includes navigation, commercial fishing, recreational fishing, and other recreational pieces. So, the director can then decide to approve, approve with conditions that might change how that shellfish lease is set up or what is allowed on that shellfish lease, and can also deny that shellfish lease. And so, the last thing to cover is how you should be making public comments tonight.

If we have a proposed shellfish lease in an area, this is all of Bogue Sound, we are not looking for general water body comments. So, saying that a recreation or other uses occur in the water body is not what we're looking at tonight. We're looking at direct uses, specific uses of that location. So, if we have a proposed shellfish lease, the type of public comment that we are interested in is use of this shoal for recreation uses, use of this lease footprint for fishing or use of the lease footprint for other protected trust rights. So now we will switch back over to the public hearing.”

4. Public Comments

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“First, I will go through the information for the proposed shellfish leases, then I will open comments to anyone else who wishes to be heard, and lastly, I will give each of the shellfish lease applicants an opportunity to speak. I will call on commentators by name in the order they signed up to speak. With that, I will read the information on the proposed shellfish leases. The proposed shellfish leases receiving public comment at this hearing are listed here. 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, a 2.36-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on April 19, 2023, by Michael J Linz, Jr., located in Bogue Inlet. The management plan indicates the use of floating gear for the commercial production of oysters and seeding of bottom with clams protected with predator netting for the commercial production of clams. Division staff conducted a site investigation on June 12 and 21, 2023, which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero submerged aquatic vegetation, which I will refer to as SAV.

Next, a 3.78-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on June 13, 2023, by Thomas A. Cannon, located in the Mainland Areas of Topsail Sound. The management plan indicates the use of floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on August 3rd and 7, 2023, which found 2.08 bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Next, a 0.71-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on July 6, 2023, by White Oak Oyster Company, agent Benjamin J. Davey located in Bogue Inlet. The management plan indicates the use of bottom cages and a suspended longline (cage) system for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on August 11, 2023, which found zero bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Next, a 3.95-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on July 26, 2023, by Thomas A. Cannon, located in the Mainland Areas of Topsail Sound. The management plan indicates the use of floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on August 21st and 22, 2023, which found 1.88 bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Next, a 3.85-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on August 1, 2023, by Shawn P. Burns, located in the Mainland Areas of Topsail Sound. The management plan indicates the use of floating gear for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on August 22, 2023, which found 1.15 bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

And lastly, a 3.04-acre shellfish bottom and water column lease applied for on August 1, 2023, by James Hammock and Sarah Zajovits, located in the New River below the highway

172 bridge. The management plan indicates the use of bottom cages and a rack and bag system for the commercial production of oysters. Division staff conducted a site investigation on September 26, 2023, which found 3.73 bushels of shellfish per acre and zero SAV.

Now, I will call on the public for comments on the proposed shellfish leases. When I call your name, please come to the podium, state your name and 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 on the podium. If you do not speak directly into the microphone, we may not be able to accurately transcribe your remarks. You will have three minutes to speak. I will hold up a finger when you have one minute remaining, and my hand when you reach three minutes.

If anyone has questions, staff and I will be happy to meet with you after the hearing. For those on Webex, if you have any questions not pertaining to the leases mentioned tonight, please call, or email us. Stephen will place our contact information in the chat for you or you can write it down from the last slide.

First, I will call on Raymond Brittain. Next will be Henry Murray.”

Raymond Brittain, Spring Tide Guide Service

“I’m Captain Ray Brittain with Spring Tide Guide Service in Topsail, North Carolina. This, as we know, has been pretty tough in our area. Especially on my business. So, the only one I am going to oppose tonight is [23-046BL/23-047WC](#), Shawn Burns. I’m surprised they even moved forward with this cutting off an entire bay like that. So, that’s a very important bay to us. It’s a small bay but it’s very important, and the way we get in is right where that lease is. On the south side there are a lot of oysters to dig. That’s a spot we fish on a mid, falling tide is the best. So, I can get around the north side of it on a super high tide, but that is not when we fish there. The ones that Thomas Cannon is going for—They’ve already put the ones in the back, so it’s kind of a moot point at this point. I can give him my blessings on those. It’s not, right where he’s at, it’s not a spot we really fish. I’m not just going to go up against those for the sake of going up against them. We are at capacity ... But the one that Mr. Burns is trying to put in—You know, I will offer this. If he shifts it down to where the ... southern point. Yeah, I think we would be fine. Closer to where ... we would be alright. So, some other comments I want to make ...”

Henry Murray

“I’m Henry Murray ... Topsail Island ... what Captain Brittain said about lease number [23-046BL/23-047WC](#), Mr. Burns. As Ray mentioned, completely blocks our access to that bay. There is a narrow access in that bay to be begin with—This leaves us ... With the lease further

south as previously mentioned, won't feel the effect just that much. Basically, y'all have got so many leases down in that Water's Bay area at this point, that's a lost cause for us, that ship has already sailed. That is an area we will not be able to fish ... We repeatedly voiced our concerns about the density of the leases in the Onslow area, specifically Topsail Sound, which largely seems to have fallen upon deaf ears. A lot of what we have said seems to fall on deaf ears. ... studies have been done to determine what your leases ... so nobody knows, yet you continue to approve these leases in the Topsail Sound area. I'd like to suggest at this point we've all been through our share and it's time for y'all to move on. Thank you."

Lee Parsons, GottaFly Guide Service

"My name's Lee Parsons of GottaFly Guide Service ... watching fisherman go down ... tonight I'm here to oppose 23-046BL/23-047WC, Shawn Burns ... with everybody else, move it to the south, southwest and that would be great. Closing off the bay, it's a small bay to begin with ... I'm not going to oppose here the other proposals here tonight ... and because of that ... but anyway, the state needs to do a study, they need to do a study on what the cages are actually doing to fishery. I can tell you what I know as a person that has a degree of marine technology and another one in marine methodology, but the state doesn't listen to me or anybody else. I've offered my boat, I've offered my time, I've offered to pay observers, and y'all have turned me down every time. And you know, until the state decides to do something, and really do something which y'all need to do, we're just going to see a decline in what's going on. Traps Bay was ruined because of the cages. Used to be I could go in there and spend two days or all day in there with two different sets of clients and have 35 fish drum days. They put the cages in there and it deteriorated. If I can catch three fish in Traps Bay now in the morning, I'm doing good, but that's how much effect these cages are having. It's too much noise. The motors are tearing up the bottoms, but y'all won't listen to any of this and you need to. That's all I've got to say. The state needs to get off their butts and do something. Thank you."

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

"Next up is Michael Opeguard followed by Joseph Palitti."

Michael Opeguard

"Thank you for your time. I'm here to oppose 23-046BL/23-047WC. Again, as we've stated before, it's blocking our access to a main fishing spot. I would encourage the DMF to really look at the number and carrying capacity of what we have in our Sounds right now. We are reaching that capacity quickly with the current moratorium that we have on the county south of us. It has moved a lot of pressure this way and we've asked several times for a meeting to bring the other user groups involved into the process and that has yet to happen. Again, I'm opposing this lease because it does block our access, and it also blocks navigation into that bay."

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

"Thank you. All right, next up is Joseph Palitti, followed by Kimberly Brownfield."

Joseph Palitti

“Yes hi, my name is Joseph Palitti. I'm a 58-year resident, Topsail Island, fish this area majority of my life, and it seems like we're losing more and more areas that we fish. I'm opposed to the lease **23-046BL/23-047WC**, Shawn Burns, due to the fact that you won't be able to fish that bay anymore that lease goes up. And I just feel like we're losing too much area. Another one's too much. Thank you for your time.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Thank you. Next up as Kimberly Brownfield followed by Eustace Wood.”

Kimberly Brownfield

“Hi, thank you. I'm also opposing the lease Shawn Burns **23-046BL/23-047WC**. I can, everything that they just said, I could just repeat it again for you. I totally agree with, I know all of you still my fellow friends and fishermen. And then I fished I'm going to add a trial fisherman beds in the Island area, more islanding Waters Bay all through that. That's my, that's my sanctuary, that's my recreational fisherman, but I'm out there probably four or five times a week. That one particular day too is definitely an area where beds are predominantly there and if they put that lease in there, you can't navigate through there to get to them and they'll, they just won't be there. People say you can fish around them. I very rarely see fish around them. What I do see is along the lines that are wrapped around and where people have tried to, where I've even seen fish hooked on one and got wrapped around in the thing and then I found a carcass in laying up on the beach from same thing, but, but anyway, again, I just want to reiterate everything that they've already said and I'm asking for that one to be denied.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Thank you. Next is Eustace Wood, followed by Chris Matteo.”

Eustace Wood

“Hey, my name's Eustace Wood. I'm a 1979 graduate of North Carolina State University with a degree in biology and a major in fishery science. I've been in a crabber here in Pender County for 47 years. I've got complaints about lease **23-046BL/23-047WC**, Mr. Burns. **23-015BL/23-016WC**, and **23-024BL/23-025WC**, Mr. Cannon. That area there in Waters Bay, which you all called Topsail Sound, is right between two of the biggest landings for all the kayak crowd to fish in Pender County. Hundreds of people use this every summer. They've just about got the whole bay staked out for oyster lease. Well, number one, that's a big problem for the other users of this area. It's a spatial problem for me because I'm a crabber with over 400 crab pots. A lot of them are peeler pots, some of them are crab pots. I don't use them all at the same time, but I can't operate around any of these leases. I go in bad weather, calm weather, whatever. When my buyer needs crabs, I go get them. So, you gotta stay clear of all this mess and it doesn't give you a lot of room to operate about all this steel and stakes and all that in

the water. We have a hundred thousand people a week on Topsail Island on vacation here, and we just don't need this. Thank you for your time.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Thank you. Next up is Chris Matteo, follow by Michael MacNair.”

Chris Matteo, North Carolina Shellfish Growers Association

“My name is Chris Matteo, I’m the head of the North Carolina Shellfish Growers Association, also vice president of East Coast Shelter. Definitely sympathetic to what's going on with this area, as a lot of the guides and folks who have been at these meetings before know. It's mostly a byproduct of having a moratorium in place in Bogue Sound and New Hanover County to the north and south of these areas. So new growers who are being encouraged to get into the business are being funneled into this area. You know, that said, oyster farming is probably the highest use of estuarine water unlike most activities. We have a great net positive environmental impact. The public trust has best served by producing sustainable proteins the way shelters farm. There's no need for DMF to study the impacts of cages or anything else. We're late to the game in North Carolina. Most of these studies exist and have existed for 20 or 30 years elsewhere. We're just late to the farming industry in the state. And from personal experience and having been in the industry now for eleven years, some of the best fishing in Pamlico County is in and around my leases and so, and the reason for that is there it provides habitat. Obviously, if you're a fishman of any worth, you know that structure is generally good for fish and habitats good for fish as are the creatures and the food supply that grows inside of our bags and cages along with our oyster supply. In fact, when control over sorry, one of one of your folks showed up today and we caught a patient of the dock right next to all our dear while you're standing there. But I do appreciate what's going on down this way. I know that, you know, the densities, at least when we look at the maps. They appear to be, you know, getting up there. One distinction I would make is that there are intensive aquaculture operations and leases that have water columns and there's a lot of just bottom traditional leases in the area. So if, if, you know, you're not on the water, if you're just looking at the leasing tool, know that the traditional bottom leases are certainly easy to fish. Thank you.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Thank you. Next up I have Michael MacNair.”

Michael MacNair, N Sea Oyster Company

“Hello, I'm Michael Connor MacNair with N Sea Oyster Company. I just wanted to help back up what Chris Matteo said, just the, the need for science to happen in this area about the impacts to oyster farming, we are extremely late to. There's a numerous amount of benefits that are studied in every state around the nation and around the world at this point. That's why a lot of us adventured into oyster farming. A lot of us are, part of your community, like to fish, like to be guides, like to do a lot of that as well. Nobody's here to, you know, make it harder for

you to fish or make it so that there's less fish for you. You know, I've lived here for ten years, I got my degree of geological oceanography with an emphasis on shellfish. That through the University of North Carolina Wilmington. I've been studying this area for like 15 years, I utilize the waters every day four times a day. I have to say that I see a huge, a drastic amount of fish where there is a lot of gear and not so much fish where there isn't gear. I do think that that your opinions are heard and nobody in the ocean department community is trying to make this harder for you to fish and to guide like I truly believe that we're a force better together. I truly believe that there are less fish due to the immense amount of people that are coming into this area, they're pressured more. There's more habitat destruction where juvenile fish need to be and where all these fish need to be and really if you, if you wanted to do something about it, we would be a forced better working together instead of opposing one another. Thank you."

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

"Thank you. Now Stephen will call the folks who are joining us via Webex or by phone who wish to speak. He will mute you after he called your name."

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

"Okay, we have two calling users and all the information I have identifying them is a portion of their phone number, somebody from the 336 area code, I'll unmute you and ask you if you would like to speak. And a 2nd call in user from a 910 area code and I'll unmute you. The 910 area code user has not responded. Additional person Daniel Cheshire, I'll unmute you. And I did not get response there. The one remaining is a TJ Chafatelli."

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

"Okay, and that concludes the registered speakers. Was there anyone I missed or anyone who has changed their mind would like to speak? So please raise your hand. Instructions are posted in the chat."

[Inaudible]

Unidentified

"Yeah, you know, you're sitting just shy of eight acre the other three just shy of twelve on almost 20. As as Mr. Wood said I utilize that area in the springtime. Pretty heavy for crabbing, you know, as well as other folks do you. But, again, just opposed to the column lease itself, not, you know, all four bottom leases and all that but opposed to the, to the column leave Mr. Cannons and I think his name was Julian Fenner. That's all I got to say. Appreciate it."

Sarah Zajovits

"Hi, my name is Sarah Zajovits. I've been working here on an oyster lease right in the New River Inlet for like two years and I do understand the concerns of commercial fisherman completely. I just wanted to note some of my experiences and things that I've seen out there

just to kind of add comment. I do understand that our stocks are in danger and feeling a lot of pressure from anthropogenic sources, but it could be a lot of things even down to microplastics, so even marble fish when they eat microplastics actually it changes their behavior, and they act erotically and can be eaten. So, there's lots of things that can cause that. But on a positive note, I'll say that our oyster lease that I've been working for the past two years, it was absolutely nothing when I started and put out these cages in the last two years it is completely exploded with life. Down to small little marble fish especially now kind of spring going into summer. I see old schools that are using our cages for that shelter and all the pin fish come in. I can't even tell you how many crabs I have crawling up my legs all the time. Then honestly, it's like a little neighborhood for stone crabs, every cage you pick up and turn over, there's a stone crab, just waiting to kind of scurry out from the brush. So, I just kind of wanted to shed light about positive things I've seen on our lease and just how life is really glorified all around there and some of the guys I bring out with me on the boat, they actually take. Their time on their lunch and their breaks to go out there and fish and cast net alright around our lease, and they love it. So, I just wanted to add to the positive things I've seen out there. Thank you.”

Brittani Reed, Soundside Oyster Company

“Hi, my name is Brittani. I work for Soundside Oyster Company. I just wanted to back her up a little bit, as far as my experiences on the leases, it's flourishing with fish everywhere. The guys sometimes have to like hold back from wanting to go fishing just because there's so many wildlife out there. I just want to say I think we all need to support one another instead of competing against each other. I think when Shellfish people and fishermen work together, we could actually make something pretty beautiful out there, but that's all I had to say. Thank you.”

TJ Chafatelli, Soundside Oyster Company

“I'm also a Soundside oyster farmer. I work with Brittani on a daily basis and I just really, I think she hit the nail on the head, wanted to back her up and saying that, you know, we see an immense amount of wildlife especially fishing and as an avert fisherman, you know, the trout and other species are really doing. Great right around our leases, our floating cages especially, and I definitely think the best thing for all of us to do, like she was saying, would be to work together between, you know, every other industry out there, fisherman and anyone else is along with the farmers and learn how we can all benefit and help the water and the ecosystem and not compete with one another, but that's about it.”

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

“Thank you. I believe that's everyone.”

[Inaudible]

Stephen Johnson, Hearing Staff

“He’s online, I’ll have to see if he would like to speak. Yes, Benjamin Davey.”

Benjamin Davey, 23-018BL/23-019WC Applicant

“Hi, can you hear me? Okay, great. Hi everyone, my name is Benjamin Davey. I’m with White Oak Oyster Company. The one thing I just I wanted to mention about the lease and the Bogue Inlet that I applied for 23-018BL/23-019WC is, that, really try to strategically locate this farm, trying to balance all stakeholders on. So this location is a subtidal sandbar, where, the tide on a regular basis gets low, about you know, just under a foot, to a half a foot seasonally and then keeping it away from the both channels there on either side as, keeping it away from those as well as away from any shore line where there’s active fishman, and you know, shrimping and all that going on. So, I just wanted to say that, you know, went through every effort of trying to strategically locate this one in a place where it minimizes as much as possible any, minimize any kind of conflicts in the area. So, I just want to mention that and thanks for letting me speak.”

Shawn Burns, 23-046BL/23-047WC Applicant

“Hey, I’m Shawn Burns. I applied for this lease. I do live here in this area, and I did hear, you know, a lot of concern about the location. I did try to locate it. So that it would have a minimum impact, and I did try to leave a fair amount around the one side of the lease to allow, a pathway for both traffic in and out of that. They and certainly my plan is to deploy the gear in such a fashion that there would be, there’ll be multiple lanes that I’ll be steering a boat in and out of, from front to back through that, so it should be easily navigable for someone to be able to get in and out of that bay. Thank you.”

Michael Linz, Jr., 23-006BL/23-007WC Applicant

“Yeah, can you guys hear me? All right. I have nothing further to add to this. I appreciate your guys’ time and everybody’s comments and concerns. Thanks for everybody’s consideration. That’s it.”

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“Thank you.”

5. Closing Remarks

Zach Harrison, Hearing Officer

“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 this process.”

Time of Adjournment

6:49 PM