

U.S. AQUACULTURE SOCIETY

It is a wonderful feeling to know that I have your confidence and support as I step into the role of President of the United States Aquaculture Society (USAS). My sincere hope is that I do the job justice while I am here; these are large shoes to fill! As I have been reflecting on what I would like to say once I had this special platform, I kept coming back to the path that has led me to this spot. Growing up, I had no background in farming, and I definitely didn't know what aquaculture even was, yet somehow this industry has captivated me since I first learned about it as an undergraduate student. Now I cannot imagine myself working in any other field. Mind you, initially I didn't know how I would fit into the industry but those details didn't matter at all. I just knew that I wanted to devote myself to feeding the world, the idealism of youth perhaps, but that desire has never left and I see aquaculture as one way to help do just that.



there who were just as passionate about aquaculture as I was or the that I got to meet the people whose research I was citing and realize just what a great group of people you all are. Regardless, I knew that I wanted to get more involved in this industry and that eventually led to me serving on the USAS Board for the first time in 2006.

In my day job, I work at Delaware State University, where I have a split research and extension appointment, supporting a small number of very diverse growers, who are increasingly focusing on shellfish aquaculture. Throughout my career, I have endeavored to reduce aquaculture's impact on the environment and believe a thriving aquaculture industry depends on our resolve to create the smallest environmental footprint possible. My professional goals are to continue to strengthen and support the aquaculture industry by conducting applied research and to share this new information with producers to enhance the industry and its products.

It wasn't until graduate school that I first learned about the USAS, like many others I would imagine, by presenting my in-progress research at an annual meeting. In my case, that was World Aquaculture 1999 in Tampa, FL. During my first meeting, I am not sure what struck me more - the national platform that I had to share MY research, the fact that there were hundreds of other people out

I'm glad to help steer USAS in my new position as President. Of, course, I would be remiss not to acknowledge those who have come before me in this position. This list is long and I am fortunate to consider many of these folks my friends. Needless to say, I will be

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committee will soon begin the process of developing an election roadmap, including the identification of a slate of candidates to stand for the election, hopefully in July this year. I also wish to take this opportunity to congratulate two fellow Board members, Dr. Alexander Kefi (Southern Africa), who has recently been promoted to Director of Fisheries in Zambia, and Dr. Harrison Karisa, who has just joined the World Bank fisheries program and will be based in the USA. Congratulations for stepping up the ladder! It means a lot to the African Chapter.

From our WAS headquarters, I am sure you will hear from the WAS President's Column of the recent changes to the WAS Board as announced at the recently held Annual Board and Business Meeting

2021. I wish to thank all outgoing Board members we have worked with for all their support. Special thanks go to Drs. Jimmy Avery and Maria Portella, past presidents who have been actively involved in the Chapter's early stages of operation. I also wish to welcome new Board members who have just assumed duty, including the incoming WAS President, Dr. Antonio Garza de Yta. We hope to work closely with them in delivering according to our mandates and efforts to have the "WAS we all want."

Lastly, let me once again wish all of you and your families safety and good health as we keep weathering through the COVID storm. My prayer is that 2021 will be a much better year for us all.

— *Sherif Sadek, President*

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calling on their collective experiences and wisdom as I take on my new role.

I think we can all agree that 2020 was a year unlike any other in recent memory. Regardless of last year, I choose to remain optimistic that we can do better, the future can be brighter, we can become a more unified country and we can do more to provide safe and healthy seafood to help feed the world. Aquaculture has a positive role to play in our nation's economy and we can work to advance it even more.

Although other stories in the mainstream media have eclipsed news about US aquaculture and the hardships many of you are facing, there have been some amazing efforts to quantify the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the industry and to support the industry through these difficult times. I cannot mention all of the specific efforts made or the individual champions that have stepped forward to make a difference, and I do apologize in advance for that, but here are just a few of the highlights that make me proud to be involved in THIS industry.

The first example is the quarterly survey from Virginia Tech Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center and The Ohio State University Extension to capture and quantify the effects of the pandemic on aquaculture, aquaponics and allied industries. As the saying goes, 'knowledge is power,' and this effort has provided an honest look at the scale of the pandemic's effect on our growers. Moving forward, information gleaned from these surveys can help justify continued support of the domestic aquaculture industry and find strengths and weaknesses within the industry. Equipped with this knowledge, producer groups, state aquaculture associations and regulators can make better informed decisions on where to go from here. More information about this survey, response and findings can be found here: https://www.ares.vt.edu/ares/virginia-seafood/research/Impacts_of_COVID19.html.

Another example is the NOAA Sea Grant FY2020 COVID-19 Related Rapid Response (<https://seagrants.noaa.gov/Portals/0/Documents/SeaGrant-Natl-COVID-Summary-Oct20-2020.pdf>). Sea Grant recognized the impact that the pandemic was having

on the seafood industry and responded quickly. Individual Sea Grant programs responded with a range of creative solutions to help locally. In Wisconsin, funds were used to support an outreach specialist to assist with local seafood marketing. In Oregon and North Carolina, Sea Grant used their funds to support direct seafood sales. In Delaware and New Hampshire, a portion of the funds were used to make direct purchases of shellfish that local growers were unable to sell due to depressed markets and that were then planted out for use in restoration efforts. A similar program has been implemented by The Nature Conservancy on a larger scale, purchasing and then planting ~5,000,000 oysters.

I realize that none of these efforts — the impact survey, Sea Grant's rapid response grants, or the Nature Conservancy's purchase of un-sellable oysters for restoration — can fill the holes in an individual farm's bottom line or make folks whole from their business or personal losses resulting from the pandemic, but to me, they illustrate the wonderful community we are a part of, and showcase how resilient and adaptable the US aquaculture industry really is because of all of you. There have been so many creative 'solutions' to the problem of declining restaurant sales. Just a few of the approaches that I have heard about are growers switching to direct-to-consumer online sales, the establishment of community-supported fisheries and identification of new markets (e.g., overseas, value-added, etc.). Your creativity never ceases to amaze me.

As I step into the role of USAS President, I want to use my time to continue to build on the solid foundation that has been created over the years by past USAS Presidents and Boards. I am particularly passionate about engaging with our student members. They are the future of our Society and without their input, involvement and leadership, we all lose. We added two new student subunits in 2020 and hope to add at least one more in 2021.

Moving forward, please feel free to reach out with comments, suggestions and/or concerns. The best way to reach me is via e-mail at dmcintosh@desu.edu. I look forward to seeing you all at Aquaculture America 2021 in San Antonio, Texas, later this year!

— *Dennis McIntosh, President*