

WI AQUAPONICS MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT GROUP

July 21, 2015

WISLINE Call Facilitator – WDNR Chris Lilek
Meeting Minutes

Participants: Chris Lilek – DNR Sustainable Business Section, , Greg Lawless - Food System Development Program at UW Extension, Rochelle Sandrin– Office of Curriculum & Instruction at Milwaukee Public School District, Jesse Blom – Sweet Water Foundation, Tony Gibson -Urban Waters Program Manager, Groundwork Milwaukee, Will Erikson – DNR Sustainable Business, Professor Chris Hartleb-UW-Stevens Point, and Danny Hill – Growing Power

The purpose of this call was to continue our discussion how Federal, State and County regulatory, funding & technical assistance staff can support aquaponic farming in Wisconsin. The next conference call is scheduled **for October 20, 2014 from 10am – 11am**. Conference call in number: (630) 424-2356, Passcode 6550444#

Danny Hill Shares “What’s Going On This Summer at Growing Power”!

Danny is the Aquaponics Specialist and Urban Farm Manager at Growing Power Inc.'s Milwaukee Headquarters.

<http://www.growingpower.org/>

Danny let us know that the Jan – June Aquaponics Training Course went well. The students learned how to build and take care of Lake Perch and Basil, Water Cress and Mint production. They were able to build three 5000 gallon systems this year. A youth corp of students 8 to 12 years old is helping to clean out sand filters and settling tanks this summer.

Growing Power is also assisting the installation of an aquaponics system in Nambi, Africa called Synergy Farms, Inc
<http://www.synergyfarmsinc.com/> .

Growing Power is also building tanks for 15,000 Yellow Perch in Indiana this summer. The hatchery will be able to sell perch fingerlings for \$1 a fingerling; massive orders can have a price break. Current Health Certificates will accompany all orders.

Growing Power will be hiring a few fulltime positions in the future.

A discussion among the participants generated interest in good jobs for the students in the future; Food Processing, Water Technology, Urban Food Production Manager, etc... A big question that needs to be answered is how to make aquaponic systems profitable for supporting employment opportunities. Growing Power has researched Black Soldier Fly (a southern grub) food for carnivorous fish, but they are hard to reproduce in winter. They have installed solar panels, which is a good addition for perch. Perch do not need as warm of water as Tilapia. The most important income to an aquaponics system is growing high value produce, which is purchased year round.

Brief Introduction to the Walleye Aquaponics Research Study by Dr. Chris Hartleb

Dr. Hartleb who oversees the Aquaponics Innovation Center in Montello will be there often, starting this summer. That’s when two interns will embark on a research project to determine whether walleyes can be used in aquaponics. Walleye live in colder water than tilapia, and they’re carnivores, whereas tilapia are omnivores that prefer to consume plants, Hartleb said. One thing that the research would help determine, he said, is whether walleye droppings would make suitable nutrients for plants cultivated in an aquaponics environment. Also, the researchers hope to learn techniques for maximum success in raising walleye in captivity. Hartleb noted that news outlets in Minnesota and Wisconsin have exposed the practice of many restaurants that advertise walleye on their menus and actually serve a less costly fish, zander, which is an entirely different species. “If we can improve the production of walleye,” he said, “it will push the false fish out.” Read more: http://host.madison.com/news/local/uw-stevens-point-opens-aquaponics-center-in-montello/article_f8203f1f-dbf6-5e5f-a49a-cf873f3792b3.html#ixzz3cUeJp3VT

Dr. Hartleb let us know that over 700 visitors attended the Center’s Grand Opening in April this year! There are 6 aquaponics systems in place with full chemistry and biology laboratories in each system. Their first study will

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concentrate on comparing Tilapia to Walleye fish systems. The students will be measuring everything. They will be getting their fingerlings from the Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility, Bayfield, Wisconsin on July 5, 2015. The crops they will grow will be: Romaine Lettuce, Kale and Bok Choy. The walleye will be ready to harvest in 9 months. They have gas powered heaters for very cold days and evaporation chillers for very hot days. Usually the automated shade cloth system regulates temperatures for the buildings. They currently buy commercial food for the fish, but may be doing research on feed in the future.

The Center has hired a Green House Manager and two student interns. UW – Stevens Point has had 24 graduates from their aquaponics courses and 100% of those students were able to find good jobs. Half of the students launched their own aquaponics farm. High schools students attended the Aquaponics On-Line course and got high school credit for the course in 2015. Dr. Hartleb said they did a good job with the course.

Call Participant Round Robin of News

Rochelle Sandrin let us know that Milwaukee Public Schools Milwaukee Public School District's aquaponics teaching lessons for K – 8th grade will be complete by Fall 2015. The lessons are from all different disciplines and age groups. They can be used to fulfill science, math and English lesson requirements. Jesse Blom from Sweet Water Foundation is assisting in the lesson development. A copy of some of the lessons can be found at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sb4j6irotky57ti/PDF%20Booklet.pdf?dl=0> By the end of 2015, the school district will have 18 schools with aquaponics systems.

Jesse Blom shared that in addition to the work with the Milwaukee Public Schools the Sweet Water Foundation is also assisting with aquaponics system at the Heart House, Milwaukee, WI <http://www.heartloveplace.org/> and helping add catfish to the aquaponic system at <http://roeselerfarms.com/>.

Tony Gibson let us know that Ground Works is supplying aquaponics tanks to inner city classrooms in Milwaukee to get kids interested in agriculture and the environment. <http://www.groundworkmke.org/about.html>. Six of the students are involved in “Build a Boat by Hand” program. <https://www.facebook.com/allhandsboatworks>. Ground Work would like to take the students on a tour of Wisconsin Aquaponics farms and also track the students continued interest and education in the sciences.



Greg Lawless explained how the Urban Economic Development Association (www.uedawi.org) provides connections between the aquaponic growing systems and consumers in urban areas. Greg & Tony will be in contact with Professor Chris Hartleb to figure out how the on-line training UW – Stevens Point offers in Aquaponics can be offered across the State of Wisconsin; including in urban areas like Milwaukee. A technical college in Mequon, WI may be a good location for the hands-on portion of the training. <http://www.matc.edu/about/campuses/mequon/index.cfm>

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Jake Zimmerman - DNR- Water Quality summarized two of his aquaponics projects; one in the Bayfield County, Wisconsin area that include an aquaponic tank and green house and irrigation tree farm and the other a recirculation & green house facility in Hixton, Wisconsin that will be raising <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/brandon-gottsacker/58/391/785>

Will Erikson – DNR Sustainable Business shared that a friend has a small aquaponics growing system in their garage and he is very interested in seeing aquaponics farming expand in Wisconsin.