



## Letter from the Director

Aloha,

This month's issue features an interview with Dr. Jo-Ann Leong, who is retiring from her positions as Director of HIMB and Chair of the CTSA Board of Directors. Jo-Ann has been instrumental in many changes regarding CTSA operational procedures during her 12 years on the Board. Her extensive background in aquaculture has helped us to grow as an organization, and I am very appreciative of her hard work, dedication, and leadership.

CTSA's Board of Directors, Industry Advisory Council, Technical Committee, and sub-awarded researchers are the backbone of our organization. We rely heavily on their collaborative efforts to leverage the Center's limited funds in support of projects that have the most positive and immediate impacts to the regional aquaculture industry. Cooperation among these groups is essential, and with Jo-Ann at the 'helm of our ship,' we have charted a successful course through uncertain waters of decreasing federal funding.

Looking ahead to future collaborative opportunities, CTSA together with the University of Guam and the College of Micronesia will host a three-day meeting at the University of Guam this October. The primary goal of the meeting "*Partnership for Success: Strategic Planning for Aquaculture Development in the Western Pacific Islands*" is for researchers and other stakeholders to discuss aquaculture prospects in the region and develop an effective plan of action. Especially considering recent developments mentioned in the "Our Ocean" article below, it is my dream to see the aquaculture industry develop and work together with capture fisheries to establish food security in these remote islands. I believe that teamwork will be the key to achieving this.

If you are interested in learning more about the upcoming meeting, please email [mbrooks@ctsa.org](mailto:mbrooks@ctsa.org).

Mahalo,

*Cheng-Sheng Lee*

Executive Director, CTSA

## In This Issue

Letter from the Director  
Q & A With Dr. Jo-Ann Leong  
"Our Ocean" Conference  
August AquaClip

## Quick Links

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## Q & A with Out-Going CTSA Board Chair Dr. Jo-Ann Leong



Jo-Ann Leong, Ph.D., has served on the CTSA Board of Directors for the past 12 years. This month, she is retiring as the Director of the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology at the University of Hawaii, and will subsequently vacate her position on the CTSA Board. The following is a 'Question & Answer' interview about her time on the Board, and what lies ahead for her professionally:



what lies ahead for her professionally.

**CTSA: In your time on the CTSA Board of Directors, what are some of the changes you have seen the program undergo?**

**Dr. Leong:** I have been with CTSA since I arrived at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. In those 12 years, I have seen the program change in membership: Oceanic Institute's leadership changed several times, the Dean of Agriculture at UH Mānoa changed, the Hawai'i Department of Agriculture's Aquaculture Resources program changed leadership, and now the Hawai'i Pacific University will become the host organization for CTSA. Gary Jensen has retired from the USDA and he has been the liaison with CTSA and the USDA administration.

Our Board has taken us through the development of a Procedures Manual and I remember many discussions regarding conflict of interest, and the evaluation of the Executive Director, who is appointed by the Executive Committee (Members are the Chair of the CTSA Board and the Oceanic Institute appointed member). Those issues have been resolved and I do believe that CTSA works well for the area.

**CTSA: How do you feel CTSA has impacted/is impacting aquaculture in the Pacific Region?**

**Dr. Leong:** CTSA leadership and its mission statement support aquaculture development in a very large area of the world. Hawai'i and its affiliated Pacific Islands cover an incredibly large area of the world. Travel costs to maintain communication, the transfer of funding to institutes whose research services and federal compliance officers are not available, the effort to initiate an industry at these sites, and the comparison between industry development in Hawai'i versus other Pacific Islands sites are real challenges. Yet, CTSA is making a difference. For example, it has initiated the pearl industry in Pohnpei and Majuro. The people at these sites have gained invaluable training and I hope this will continue. Moving the industry projects to native fish culture instead of tilapia is also something that CTSA has initiated and, I hope, will continue.

**CTSA: In your position, you have worked with several aquaculture entities in the region and beyond. What sets CTSA apart from other programs?**

**Dr. Leong:** I have served on the Western Regional Aquaculture Center board as well. The aquaculture focus there was on the salmonid fish industry, with some investment in sturgeon, hybrid striped bass, and oysters. WRAC covered a large number of states, but the expertise requirements and species under consideration were more focused. For CTSA, the industry is less developed and the geographic areas are so far apart. The species under consideration are so varied here and the conditions for growing both salt water and freshwater aquaculture must be developed here. Yet, the funds distributed to each RAC are the same, despite the fact that the challenges are critically different for CTSA.

**CTSA: What are your hopes for the future of aquaculture in Hawaii and the Pacific Region, and how do you see CTSA fitting in to that future?**

**Dr. Leong:** Island states are always challenged by the need to import their food and as Hawaii and the Pacific Islands watch their food costs rise because of higher shipping costs, we need to increase the sustainable production of food at site. That discussion must include aquaculture and we need to find cost effective and profitable means for producing aquacultured products for consumption locally. CTSA must include this objective as part of its future mission. It must also work to increase the funding that comes to the regional aquaculture centers and I hope that the Board will spend some time discussing strategies to increase this funding at the federal level.

**CTSA: Now that you are retiring as Director of HIMB, do you have plans to remain active in the aquaculture industry?**

**Dr. Leong:** My hope is that in retirement I will be able to get back to scientific research and teaching. The work we did on DNA vaccines for fish is still being pursued by my colleagues, and who knows...

## **President Obama & Secretary Kerry Call for More Domestic Aquaculture and Marine Protection at "Our Ocean" Conference**

by Meredith Brooks, CTSA

In June, the U.S. State Department facilitated the "Our Ocean" international conference on sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, and ocean acidification. At the conference, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry discussed the administration's plans to increase efforts in ocean preservation. According to a [White House Fact Sheet](#) on the announcement, "Americans all over the country depend on the ocean for food, jobs, and recreation, but the health of our ocean is under threat on multiple fronts, from overfishing to carbon pollution."

"We've already shown that when we work together, we can protect our oceans for future generations," stated President Obama. "So let's redouble our efforts. Let's make sure that years from now we can look our children in the eye and tell them that, yes, we did our part, we took action, and we led the way toward a safer, more stable world."

The declaration for increased sustainable management efforts comes after the recent release of the National Climate Assessment, which confirms that rising sea levels and ocean temperatures will significantly impact our relationship with one of our greatest resources. In a video message to conference participants, President Obama announced the following eight new executive actions to preserve and protect the oceans:

- *New protections for world-class marine areas.*
- *Combating black market fishing and supporting fishermen.*
- *Establishing a pathway to new marine sanctuaries.*
- *Meeting diverse coastal needs with regional marine planning.*
- *Understanding the impacts of ocean acidification.*
- *\$102 million to build resilience in coastal communities.*
- *Bolstering domestic shellfish aquaculture.*
- *National Strategic Plan for Federal Aquaculture Research.*

Each action will help to create a healthier ocean, and will set an example for the rest of the world to follow. Increased protection for marine areas and development of new marine sanctuaries will enhance preservation of coral reefs and other valuable habitats that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and overfishing. In the immediate future, the administration is investigating expanding protected areas near the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument in the south-central Pacific Ocean, but assured that the input of fishermen, scientists, conservation experts, elected officials, and other stakeholders will be considered prior to making any changes.

Adjustments to MPA boundaries may have an affect on U.S. capture fisheries, while improved monitoring of illegal fishing will likely impact the global seafood supply, as approximately 20% of wild-caught marine fish are landed through black market fishing.

An increase in domestic aquaculture production can help to alleviate pressure from these changes and complement traditional capture fisheries. The last two of the President's executive actions address this, as they are intended to improve opportunities for aquaculture in the U.S. As stated in the Fact Sheet, "Aquaculture is an increasingly integral source of safe, nutritious, sustainable seafood for consumers in the United States and worldwide."

The following is an excerpt from the action on domestic shellfish aquaculture, which is of particular interest to the CTSA region considering Hawaii's emerging bivalve industry:

*Federal agencies are completing work on a new roadmap to streamline the permitting process for shellfish aquaculture. The roadmap will help shellfish farmers understand how to secure the permits they need and will help federal agencies identify ways to improve efficiency in the permitting process. By removing barriers in the permitting process, the United States can encourage shellfish farming and help rebalance our seafood trade. Currently, most seafood*



*Secretary of State John Kerry is asking U.S. consumers to make sustainable seafood selections (snapshot from his "Call to Action" video)*

*consumed in the U.S. is imported, resulting in a seafood trade deficit of between \$8 and \$10 billion a year. Farming more shellfish will also be an economic boon to local communities, creating jobs and investment on our shores.*

The final action is the [National Strategic Plan for Federal Aquaculture Research](#), recently released by the Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture (chaired by Gary Jensen) with the goal to "provide a framework for coordination and collaboration across agencies on research related to this important agricultural domain and to guide Federal agencies going forward as they prioritize their aquaculture-related research and development activities." The following is the proposed vision statement for the future of aquaculture in the United States: *A globally competitive, technologically appropriate, and diverse aquaculture sector in the United States that meets increasing demand for seafood and products that are affordable and meet high standards for safety, quality, and environmental stewardship, with maximum opportunity for profitability and economic growth.*

As domestic aquaculture opportunities increase, CTSA looks forward to helping expand production in Hawaii and the U.S. Affiliated Pacific Islands. For more information and resources from the "Our Ocean" conference, please click on the following links:

[Short Call to Action video from Secretary of State John Kerry](#)  
[White House Fact Sheet: Leading at Home and Internationally to Protect Our Ocean and Coasts](#)  
[National Strategic Plan for Federal Aquaculture Research](#)

## **AquaClip ~ Quality Certification Services Launches Aquaponics GAPs Food Safety Certification Program**

*By Suzi Fraser. Aquafeed.com. August 13, 2014*

Quality Certification Services (QCS) has launched its Aquaponics Certification program to address food safety requirements applicable to aquaponic operations.

Crops and fish/shellfish are covered under this new program developed by a team of crops and aquaculture experts. Aquaponic farmers of any size will be able to apply for QCS Aquaponics Certification. The growing number of aquaponic producers worldwide will also have the option to request organic or other certifications of their crops and fish/shellfish with QCS therefore streamlining their certification needs and demonstrating responsible production practices to their customers.

QCS is looking forward to receiving feedback from industry and other aquaponics stakeholders and enthusiasts.

"QCS has long recognized the importance of symbiotic and integrated multi-trophic production systems to improve sustainability and food security. The intent of this new certification program is to better serve aquaponics producers in meeting good production practices, food safety, and sustainable consumer demands that will benefit us all in a practical and effective manner," said QCS Food Safety Program Manager Mario Velasco.

"The program was specifically developed to be both robust and affordable so that it is accessible to small scale producers," said QCS COO Ramkrishnan Balasubramanian. "QCS has 15 years of experience in this developing sector and we are proud to continue to support its growth."

Based in Gainesville, QCS offers the following certification options including Certified Organic, Certified Transitional, Certified Hormone/Antibiotic Free, Organic Aquaculture, GLOBALG.A.P. (several scopes), specific trade practices and Food Justice Certification, which will allow for consumers to choose to support a more just agricultural system.

[Click here to view the full article.](#)

The Center for Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture (CTSA) is one of five regional aquaculture

centers in the United States established and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) under grants 2008-38500-19435, 2010-38500-20948, and 2012-38500-19566. The regional aquaculture centers integrate individual and institutional expertise and resources in support of commercial aquaculture development. CTSA was established in 1986 and is jointly administered by the Oceanic Institute and the University of Hawaii.

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Center for Tropical and Subtropical Aquaculture | 41-202 Kalaniana'ole Highway | Waimanalo | HI | 96795