

MARINE AQUARIUM COUNCIL

*International Certification for the Quality and Sustainability
of Marine Aquarium Organisms ... from Reef to Retail*

MAC News

4th Quarter 2001

Director's Message

2001 proved to be an eventful year for the Marine Aquarium Council as promised when we started the year! In the last quarter alone the MAC Certification system was launched, a significant part of the industry committed to becoming MAC Certified, our Web site was redesigned and, after a two-year embargo, KLM Cargo reopened its live fish shipments using criteria based on the MAC Standards. You can read about all these developments in this issue of the MAC News.

2002 promises to be even more eventful, as the MAC Secretariat looks forward to working with its board of directors and partners to help industry operators become MAC Certified and to raise public awareness of MAC Certification worldwide.

New MAC Web Site Targets Multiple Stakeholder Groups Worldwide

The Marine Aquarium Council is pleased to announce that its recently redesigned and upgraded Web site is available at <http://www.aquariumcouncil.org/>. The new site features entry points to areas with information specifically for key MAC interest groups: marine aquarium keepers, the marine aquarium industry, public aquariums, conservationists, government agencies and the news media. Viewers can also download the MAC Core Standards and Best Practice Guidance documents, locate companies committed to becoming MAC Certified and certification companies interested in becoming MAC Accredited, learn how to submit information to the Global Marine Aquarium Database, find a variety of background information on MAC and on the global trade in marine aquarium organisms and subscribe to the MAC quarterly newsletter.

MAC Label Unveiled during Official Launch of the MAC Certification System

The MAC Certification system was publicly launched during the 2nd International Marine Ornamentals Conference at Orlando, Fla., on Nov. 27, 2001. MAC board member Bruce Bunting, vice president of the World Wildlife Fund US, with assistance from MAC Executive Director Paul Holthus, made the announcement and unveiled the MAC Certification label. Consumers will be able to identify certified facilities and organisms by looking for the label on store windows and retail aquarium tanks.

'MAC Certification harnesses economic forces for positive global environmental change,' Bunting said. 'This is a win-win solution for the consumers who buy marine ornamentals, the industry that trades in them, and the coastal communities that make their livelihood from coral reefs.' Bunting's keynote speech, 'Buy a Fish, Buy a Coral, Save a Reef,' can be found at <http://macweb.inets.com/docs/library/2/11-27-0Buntingspeech.htm>.

Dr. Malcolm Sarmiento, director of the Philippines Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, commended MAC for its effort to help transform the various organizations that make up the marine ornamental industry. 'As the industry continues to move forward in a serious quest for a win-win formula towards reform and sustainability, it can count on the Philippine government's cooperation and support,' he said.

MAC Board Approves Standards, Elects New Officers

Meeting on Nov. 27, 2001, the MAC board of directors approved the MAC Core Standards with provisions that the Standards Committee will adjust them based on feedback from their initial implementation. The board also elected the following new officers:

Chair, President and Treasurer: Bruce Bunting, World Wildlife Fund US

Vice President (Industry): Lolita Ty, Philippine Tropical Fish Export Association

Vice President (Conservation): Frank Vorhies, IUCN Business & Biodiversity Initiative

Secretary: Keith Davenport, Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association

The board commended outgoing board member Phil Shane of Quality Marine for his significant support of MAC through the years, which Phil pledged to continue.

MAC Featured at the 2nd Annual Marine Ornaments Conference

During the 2nd International Marine Ornaments Conference at Orlando, Fla., on Nov. 27, 2001, MAC Certification received recognition from a variety of conference participants.

University of Florida researchers presented their study on the value and demand for MAC Certification by the industry. According to initial responses from 40 firms (47 percent retail, 28 percent wholesale, 5 percent transshipper or distributor, 20 percent other), more than half were very or moderately familiar with the MAC certification program. When asked how likely they were to use MAC Certification in 2002, the answer from 77 percent of the respondents was very or somewhat likely.

Martin Moe of Green Turtle Publications presented the results of a recent marine ornaments survey of marine aquarium hobbyists. He said that 80 percent of the hobbyists surveyed strongly support the efforts of organizations such as the Marine Aquarium Council that are working to educate and certify those in the chain of supply of marine organisms.

In conference presentations, MAC staff provided updates on the MAC Certification system, explained the nuts and bolts of the system and summarized the MAC communications plan for educating consumers and other stakeholders in countries that import marine ornaments. In other talks, MAC staff reviewed progress in introducing MAC Certification to industry operators in the Philippines and plans to facilitate the adoption of the MAC Standards in Indonesia and the South Pacific. MAC partners discussed progress with the Global Marine Aquarium Database, monitoring protocols for MAC Certified collection areas, capacity building in the Philippines and the significance of MAC Certification to public aquaria.

Conference participants also mentioned MAC during their overall evaluation of the conference. One attendee stated, 'MAC can become the greatest hope for the long-term survival of the marine hobbyist.'

Study Confirms Feasibility of MAC Certification in Developing Countries

The International Marinelife Alliance in November 2001 completed an eight-month partnership project with MAC that investigated the feasibility of implementing the MAC Certification system in the Philippines. The study involved 339 collectors (representing about 10 percent of the nation's ornamental fish collectors) at 18 collection sites. Collectors from seven sites were able to deliver marine aquarium organisms conforming to the MAC Collection, Fishing and Holding Core Standard. They include Calatagan, Batangas; Isla Verde, Batangas; Tubigon, Bohol; Bato and Gumasa, Davao; Palauig, Zambales; Bagac, Bataan; and Coron, Palawan.

MAC will work with government, non-government and industry partners in the coming year to train additional collectors in Asia, the Pacific and elsewhere to be able to conform to the MAC Standards.

Certification Companies Give the MAC Certification System Unanimous Approval

Five international certification companies tested the MAC Certification system in early November 2001 to ensure its effectiveness throughout the supply chain. This was the last step before the system could be cleared for launching. The companies used the MAC Core Standards and Best Practice Guidance documents to analyze the operations of 18 companies in the Philippines, United States, United Kingdom and Netherlands. The two UK wholesalers who participated in the MAC test cases together account for the majority of that nation's importing capacity for marine aquarium organisms. The certifiers determined that the MAC Certification system is sufficiently robust to evaluate collection areas, resource management and industry operators throughout the chain of custody, e.g., collectors, exporters, transshippers, importers/wholesalers and retailers.

Industry Commitment to MAC Certification Continues to Grow

Forty-five companies in nine countries, including 17 wholesalers in the United States who together account for 35 to 40 percent of the US importing capacity, have signed Statements of Commitment to become MAC Certified as soon as possible. Statements of support have also arrived from major industry associations, including Ornamental Fish International as well as the Indonesia Coral, Shell and Ornamental Fish Association (AKKI) and the Philippines Tropical Fish Export Association. For a list of the committed companies as well the MAC statement of commitment, visit the MAC Web site at <http://www.aquariumcouncil.org/>.

Database on Marine Aquarium Trade Now Available on the Web

The UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) has announced that the Global Marine Aquarium Database on the trade in aquarium species is available at <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/marine/GMAD>. Users of the database can access approximately 50,000 records of trade in live aquarium species and may query these geographically (e.g., the number of fish exported from the western Pacific to North America) and taxonomically (e.g., the top 10 most traded families of invertebrates in global trade). Further data collection is ongoing and the database is continuously being updated. The release of the next version is scheduled for April. UNEP-WCMC would appreciate any comments on the Web site.

KLM Looks to MAC Standards as Criteria for Reopening Marine Ornamental Shipments

After a break of about two years, KLM in November reopened the shipment of wild-caught marine fish and invertebrates. However, the suspension of the embargo is contingent upon KLM shippers in select countries agreeing to adhere to criteria for quality and sustainability, which are derived primarily from the MAC Standards. For more information, see the New Items section of the MAC Web site at <http://www.aquariumcouncil.org/webmediainfo.asp?whatsnew=on>.

MAC in the News

On Dec. 15, 2001, the MAC executive director appeared on Pet Talk of America, a live radio talk show that reaches more than 26 million households in the United States.

MAC also received recent coverage by the following media, among others:

- 'Balancing Act,' by Gary Cochran, Freshwater and Marine Aquarium, Aug. 2001
- 'Hawaii Filling World's Aquariums,' by Adrienne Ancheta, Honolulu Advertiser, Aug. 12, 2001
- 'MAC Progress Report,' by Paul Holthus, OFI Journal, Aug. 2001
- 'MAC Valuation Study at the University of Florida,' by Sherry Larkin, OFI Journal, Nov. 2001
- 'Marine Aquarium Council - Fishermen Certification System,' KITV4 Honolulu, Nov. 21, 2001
- 'Aquarium Organization Launches Program to Protect Environment,' by Mike Branom, Associated Press (reprinted in the Honolulu Advertiser, Maui News, West Hawaii Today, Tampa Tribune)

- 'Marine Aquarium Council (MAC) Launch Statement,' by Bruce Bunting, Nov. 27, 2001, <http://www.worldwildlife.org/news/>
- 'Orlando Launch for MAC Standards,' Nov. 28, 2001, <http://www.ornamental-fish-int.org/newsflash.htm>
- 'Coral Reefs: Aquarium Certification Aims to Save Reefs, Fish,' by Brian Stempeck, Greenwire, Nov. 29, 2001
- 'Marine Aquarium Council,' by Svein Fossa, PetScandinavia, Nr. 2, 2001
- 'Gifftod im Meer,' by Sarah Simpson, Spektrum der Wissenschaft, Dec. 12, 2001
- 'International Certification System for Marine Aquarium Trade,' PETS International Magazine, Dec. 2001
- 'International Certification System Aims to Protect Marine Environment,' Dec. 17, 2001, http://iucn.org/info_and_news/press/newdecember.html
- 'Legislation for January and February 2001,' by Roger Halleen, The Federation Report (Official Publication of the Federation of American Aquarium Societies), Jan. 2002