

MAC News

4th Quarter 2004

Director's Note

As 2004 closes, MAC continues to focus on increasing the supply of MAC Certified organisms. Our approach is to build up the demand and the supply of MAC Certified organisms simultaneously. However, progress in developing supply has been slower than anticipated, due primarily to the need for hands-on work with communities to develop collection area management and the need for training of collectors in responsible fishing and post-harvest practices. We have learned that we must take a more direct role in working with these communities if a sustainable supply of marine ornamentals is to be achieved on a meaningful scale and within an acceptable timeframe.

This is happening now and will increase during the next five years through the Marine Aquarium Market Transformation Initiative (MAMTI) project. Under this project, MAC will work in the Philippines and Indonesia to train collectors in proper collection and post-harvest handling methods and enable communities to manage their reef resources. This effort within these supply countries will be matched by our work to increase the participation of exporters, importers and retailers in MAC Certification and raise the awareness of, and demand for, MAC Certified ornamentals among consumers.

A greater volume and variety of MAC Certified marine aquarium organisms are making their way from the growing number of MAC Certified collection areas and fishers to an increasing number of MAC Certified exporters, importers and retailers. Those who helped form MAC and the early adopters of MAC Certification have stepped forward to meet the challenges facing the marine aquarium industry as the concern for the health of coral reefs worldwide grows along with the demand for marine aquarium organisms and other coral reef resources. Other members of the industry are invited to join in this inclusive effort to bring quality, responsibility and sustainability to the marine aquarium trade and ensure a future based on healthy reefs, healthy fish, healthy businesses and a healthy hobby.

As David E. Boruchowitz, editor-in-chief of Tropical Fish Hobbyist noted: "We as aquarists know ... that the value of a plant or animal is not definable only with respect to what it can do for humans. The diversity of life on this planet is itself a wealth nothing else can replace."

INDONESIA UPDATE

Efforts by Indonesia Collectors Increase the Quality of Their Fish

One of the problems of maintaining low mortality levels and reducing stress in marine aquarium organisms after being caught (even when cyanide-free capture techniques are used) is the holding methods employed by collectors before they transport the fish from remote collection areas to the exporters' facilities. Currently, many collectors hold their catch from two to 15 days in plastic bags in their homes or boats, with laborious water and oxygen changes during the holding time.

As part of the MAC post-harvest training, fishermen's groups are encouraged to keep fish in a simple holding facility that includes a basic filtering system with pump aeration and containers in which to separate fish. Two types of holding facilities are currently being tested with collectors in Indonesia that are seeking MAC Certification. The first is a floating platform at sea. The second is a land-based facility.

Members of the Mina Bhakti Soansari fishermen's group in Les village have tried a new land-based holding facility, which has resulted in healthier fish and reduced mortality. By segregating their fish, other Indonesia suppliers are also finding that it is easier for them to record the status of their stock. By following the MAC Standards and working with collectors who also follow the MAC Standards, these suppliers are also able to trace individual fish back to the particular collector who caught it, should any corrective action be needed.

Training on Monitoring and Surveillance in Buleleng District, Indonesia

A monitoring, surveillance and law enforcement training workshop was held by the Marine and Fishery office of Buleleng district (DKP Buleleng), Indonesia, with support from MAC. The objective of the workshop was to build the capacity and understanding of stakeholders who will be involved in managing and protecting the fisheries resources in Buleleng District. The workshop was attended by 50 people including community leaders, community surveillance groups, village Heads, police, fishermen's groups, non-government organizations (Yayasan Pilang and Yayasan Bahtera Nusantara) and staff of DKP Buleleng. MAC has been asked by DKP Buleleng and by the participants who attended this training to assist them in holding similar training sessions at the sub-district level.

PHILIPPINES UPDATE

Philippine Collectors Complete Training, Seek MAC Certification

Some 175 collectors in Cagayancillo (Palawan), Camotes Island in Cebu and Marcilla in Northern Palawan who completed their training for MAC Certification in mid-December have set their sights on achieving certification in early 2005. Another batch of 120 collectors in Tawi-Tawi in Mindanao will conclude their training in March. The training in Tawi-Tawi was suspended from mid-October to mid-November 2004, due to the month-long observance of Ramadan.

Philippines Mayor Donates Holding Facility to Camotes Collectors

The path to certification of aquarium collectors in Camotes Island in Cebu received a big boost with the construction of a land-based holding facility donated by Mayor Alfredo Arquillano Jr. The Camotes collectors had identified the lack of a holding facility as the reason they found it difficult to consistently meet the post-harvest criteria in the MAC Standards due to repeated storm damage to their floating cage holding platform.

The facility (built by MAC staff on behalf of the mayor) was turned over to the collectors group December 13 in a simple ceremony witnessed by visiting MAC staff from Manila and Hawaii. The basic facility is housed between protective outcrops of coral rock and consists of a traditional wooden bamboo structure with bamboo staging onto which 30 Styrofoam boxes sit.

Using simple plastic plumbing fittings, the Styrofoam boxes are coupled together to make a closed system. The system has a coral rubble filter and large reservoir below the floor of the wooden structure with a small submersible pump creating the necessary flow. The fish and invertebrates are segregated per collector, and the system is cleaned regularly with 50 percent water changes about every three days.

The MAC team in the Philippines will test the efficiency of this type of facility. Early evidence suggests that that this type of holding facility may be useful in other MAC Certified collection areas.

MAC North America Director Visits Philippine Collectors and Exporters

In early December, MAC North America Director Mark Schreffler visited eight exporters in Manila and Cebu as well as three collection areas and collector groups in Camotes and Bohol. Each of the organizations are MAC Certified or are seeking MAC Certification. Schreffler also visited with Dr. Ed Gomez of the University of the Philippines – Institute of Marine Sciences to discuss the MAC Mariculture and Aquaculture Management Standard, which is in the final developmental stages.

Schreffler, a former MAC Certified retailer, said he was very impressed with the level of commitment to MAC on the part of the industry operators in the Philippines with whom he met. He found the potential for the Philippines to produce a significant volume of MAC Certified organisms from MAC Certified collection areas that are managed and have responsible fisheries to be very good.

Field Scoping for New Philippine Sites for MAC Certification Efforts

MAC Philippines began preparation for work with additional collection areas and collectors in 2005 using the MAC site selection criteria. This evaluation considers reef condition, ability of collectors to comply with standards of best practice, local government support for collection area management and certification, ongoing marine ornamentals harvesting and prior use of destructive collection practices. Field scoping has been completed in Ayungon in Negros Occidental, Polillo in Quezon and Lian in Batangas. Additional potential areas for MAC Certification efforts will be assessed in early 2005.

Philippine Exporters Gear Up for MAC Certification

In anticipation of a bigger supply of MAC Certified marine aquarium organisms next year, members of the Philippine Tropical Fish Exporters Association (PTFEA) have once again reiterated their support for MAC Certification. The PTFEA members feel that, with the completion of collectors training in several collection sites in the provinces of Palawan and Cebu and the scheduled completion of work in the province of Tawi-Tawi early next year, the time has come to support the certification of additional exporters. In addition, numerous other exporters of marine ornamentals in the Philippines are working towards becoming certified or are in discussions with MAC.

PACIFIC UPDATE

CAMP Development, Reef Assessment Underway in Solomon Islands

MAC Resource Management Officer Gregory Bennett and MAC Collector Training Officer Chris Beta conducted resource assessment surveys of the aquarium fish collection sites in Madou and Rarumana, Western Province, Solomon Islands, in November. Some local collectors assisted the two MAC officers. The data from the surveys will be used in the Collection Area Management Plan (CAMP) for the area. During their visit, Bennett and Beta worked with the communities to develop the plan. The Madou and Raruman communities consider the aquarium trade as being able to provide alternative sustainable income generation.

NORTH AMERICA ACTIVITIES

MAC Seminars at Backer Xmas 2004 and Spring 2005 Trade Shows

MAC North America Director Mark Schreffler and MAC Certified retailer Pat Donston gave a well-received seminar on MAC Certification to industry members attending the 37th Annual Pet Industry Christmas Trade Show and Educational Conference, October 8-10, in Chicago. Industry response at the MAC booth was also very positive. Plans are already underway for Schreffler and one or more MAC Certified industry operators to give a follow-up seminar at Backer's 17th Annual

Pet Industry Spring Trade Show and Educational Conference, April 1-3, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The scheduled seminar will focus on reducing mortality rates in marine ornamentals. MAC is grateful to HH Backer for the complimentary exhibit space and other support that it continues to provide to MAC.

COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATION

Public Aquarium Support for MAC Renewed at the International Aquarium Congress

A presentation on MAC Certification by MAC Executive Director Paul Holthus and MAC Communications Director Sylvia Spalding was well received by more than 500 individuals attending the International Aquarium Congress (IAC) in Monterey, Calif., in December. The IAC convenes once every four years and attracts directors, curators and other public aquarium representatives worldwide. More than a quarter of the attendees visited the MAC booth to acquire the newly released MAC Public Aquarium Resource Kit and to express their support for and interest in MAC. A small group of public aquarium directors and other interested parties met informally after the MAC presentation to discuss next steps to generate more concrete support from public aquariums worldwide.

MAC Public Aquarium Resource Kit Available

In preparation for the International Aquarium Congress, MAC produced a CD containing a variety of resource tools that public aquariums can use to help raise public, hobbyist and industry awareness about issues in the marine ornamentals trade and the benefits of buying MAC Certified marine aquarium organisms. The MAC Public Aquarium Resource Kit includes seven exhibit panels in high resolution pdfs, mpeg4 versions of the MAC 5-minute and 60-second public service announcements, the MAC hobbyist brochure in five languages, the MAC card on responsible aquarium keeping, photo image examples from the MAC photo library, the MAC Certified example label, a special web version of the MAC logo for cross-linking purposes, two camera-ready ads, lesson plans, the 8-page MAC booklet for industry in five languages, the MAC booklet for hobbyist and selected fact sheets and FAQs. Public aquariums interested in obtaining a copy of the CD are asked to contact info@aquariumcouncil.org.

60-second and 5-minute PSAs Available on DVD

Alexander Gould, the voice of Nemo in *Finding Nemo*, continued his support for MAC with the completion of a 60-second public service announcement (PSA). The 60-second PSA and the previously produce 5-minute PSA are now available on DVD as well as on CD (mpeg4). The PSAs summarize the movement of marine ornamentals ... *from Reef to Retail* and encourage reef conservation through MAC Certification of the trade. Organizations interested in raising public, hobbyist and industry awareness of MAC Certification through use of the PSAs (e.g., retail store or public aquarium loops, presentations at marine aquarium society meetings and/or classrooms, public broadcast, etc.) are asked to contact info@aquariumcouncil.org.

Biology Teachers Learn about MAC

At the 2004 National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) annual conference, MAC Board member John Brandt gave a co-presentation on MAC Certification with Peg Warmack of Portage Central High School, Michigan. Warmack teaches a course on marine ecosystems based on a 70-gallon aquarium system that had been designed and set up by MAC North America Director Mark Schreffler, when he owned and operated a MAC Certified retail outlet, The Reef Shop. Over the years, MAC has worked with a variety of educational organizations to encourage the use of saltwater tanks in classrooms as a tool to educate schoolchildren about coral reef ecosystems and their conservation.

MAC CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS AND GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Draft MAC Aquaculture Standard Reviewed by MAC Board and Advisory Group

The Mariculture and Aquaculture Management Standard Advisory Group (MAMSAG) and the MAC Board of Directors recently reviewed the latest draft of the Mariculture and Aquaculture Management (MAM) Standard. Based on the comments received, it appears that the Standard is virtually complete and ready for trials through a series of test cases. Testing of the MAM Standard will be performed in the first quarter of 2005. After the Standard is approved, initial certifications to the MAM Standard may be able to occur by mid-2005.

Coralfarm Aquaristic Gains First MAC Certification in Singapore

Coralfarm Aquaristic achieved certification as a MAC Certified exporter, importer and retailer in October 2004. This was the first-ever combined MAC and ISO9001 certification audit and first organization to become MAC Certified in Singapore. The combined assessment visit was undertaken by MAC Accredited Certifier IMS. As always, please check the "Stay Updated" section on the MAC homepage at www.aquariumcouncil.org for the only official and up-to-date listing of MAC Certified suppliers.

MAC Standards and Certification Advisory Committee Established

The MAC Board of Directors has established the MAC Standards and Certification Advisory Committee (SCAC). The MAC SCAC is established as an impartial, multi-stakeholder group where no single interest predominates and will include a minimum of three MAC Board members within a structure that consists of two individuals associated with each of the following stakeholder groups: industry; consumers/public aquariums; conservation; MAC Certified organizations; scientific and academic interests; resource management; developing country and fishing community interests; and trade regulations/legislation. An initial committee of 16 members affiliated with these stakeholder areas and with broad geographic representation has been established. To get the committee started, the MAC Board selected Keith Davenport as the first Chair for an initial two-year term.

The MAC SCAC will determine the need for amendments or revisions to existing MAC Standards; develop and review those amendments and then present those amendments to the MAC Board for ratification.

The MAC SCAC will also determine the need for and develop guidance material on the MAC Standards to enable the aquarium trade to readily understand and implement MAC Certification. To undertake these efforts, the MAC SCAC may establish advisory committees and working groups to work on issues such as unsuitable species, resource assessment and monitoring methods, and CITES issues including live coral and live rock.

One of the key roles of the MAC SCAC will be to manage the revision of the existing MAC Ecosystem and Fishery Management (EFM); Collection, Fishing and Holding (CFH); and Handling, Husbandry and Transport (HHT) Standards. These MAC Standards will be adjusted to incorporate all current interpretations approved by the MAC Board. The review and revision will also involve other amendments, such as the splitting of the HHT Standard into separate documents for exporters, importers and retailers. For further information on the MAC SCAC members and work, contact peter.scott@aquariumcouncil.org.

MAC Communications Director Bids Farewell, Replacement Sought

After nearly four years with the Marine Aquarium Council, Sylvia Spalding vacated her position as MAC Communications Director at the end of 2004 to resume her previous position as Media and Education Specialist for the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. She will particularly miss working with the many industry, hobbyist, conservation and public aquarium representatives and MAC staff members worldwide whom she has had the pleasure to meet during her tenure at MAC, she said. "It has been rewarding to work with these various sectors to improve the trade and the conservation of reefs," she noted. Qualified individuals interested in this vacated position are asked to submit their resume to info@aquariumcouncil.org.

MAC in the News

"New Age of Aquariums," by Brian Lavendel. Natural Home. January-February 2005: 86-88.

"Healthy Reefs, Healthy Fish, Healthy Hobby" (MAC ad). Tropical Fish Hobbyist. January 2005: 121.

"Four Simple Steps to a Sustainable Marine Aquarium Hobby," by Jeff Kurtz. Tropical Fish Hobbyist. December 2004: 60-62, 64.

"13 Things to Look for in a Local Fish Store," by Sylvia Spalding and Rick Preuss. Tropical Fish Hobbyist. December 2004: 76-78, 80, 82.

"Six Reasons to Invest in MAC Certification: A Retailer's Perspective," by Sylvia Spalding. PETS International Magazine. December 2004: 69, 71.

"Een gecertificeerde handel in tropische mariene aquariumsoorten," by Paul Holthus. Ecologie & Ontwikkeling. NC-IUCN 2004 no. 65: 44-47.

"Fang en Økologisk Nemo," by Uffe Wilken. Samvirke. November 2004: 38-42.

"The Future of the Marine Aquarium Industry," by Paul Holthus. Pet Product News. November 2004: 4, 68.

"Swimming Along," by David Lass. Pet Product News. November 2004: 1, 69-71.

"Florida may limit catches of exotic fish for aquariums," by David Fleshler. Sun-Sentinel (South Florida). Nov. 23, 2004.

"Marine Aquarium Council Update." Fish 'N' Chips. November 2004 (www.marinefiends.com)

"Training for Quality in the Collection of Marine Aquarium Animals," by Sylvia Spalding. PETS International Magazine. October 2004: 84-85.

"Vanuatu – Saving Nemo," by Mark Corcoran. ABC TV. Sept. 11, 2004.

Upcoming Events

March 13-15: Global Pet Expo (Orlando, Fla., USA)

April 1-3: Backer's 17th Annual Pet Industry Spring Trade Show and Educational Conference (Atlantic City, NJ, USA)

April 2-3: International Coral Reef Conferences of Paris (France)

May 7-8: 4th International Days of Saltwater Aquaristic (Strasbourg, France)

May 9-13: World Aquaculture Conference (Bali, Indonesia)

June 24-26. International Marine Aquarium Conference (Chicago, Ill., USA)

July 11-16: National Marine Educators Association Conference (Maui, Hawaii, USA)

September 16-18: Marine Aquarium Conference of North America (Washington, DC, USA)

October 7-9: Backer Christmas Pet Trade Show (Chicago, Ill., USA)