

The David H. Wallace Award presented to Dr. Eric N. Powell



The National Shellfisheries Association periodically acknowledges the career contributions of shellfish biologists “whose activities in shellfisheries, aquaculture and conservation have promoted understanding, knowledge, and cooperation among industry members, the academic community, and government, as exemplified by Mr. David H. Wallace during his lifetime” by the award of the namesake David H. Wallace Award. The history of the Wallace award includes many outstanding recipients. At the 2017 NSA meeting in Knoxville TN the name of Dr. Eric N. Powell was added to that distinguished list.

Eric completed his graduate work at the University of North Carolina before joining Texas A&M University. Every benthic ecologist who passed through A&M came to know Sammy Ray and it was inevitable that Eric would join those ranks. Before long he was literally knee-deep in the oyster reefs of Galveston Bay, mapping them and beginning a career long and very productive collaboration with Eileen Hofmann and John Klinck building biological-physical models of the bay populations.

Eric would subsequently move to Rutgers University to assume the Director position at the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory at Bivalve, NJ (where else!) on the northern shore of the Delaware Bay. Here he inherited the annual oyster surveys begun many years earlier by Hal Haskin. As Chief Biologist in charge of NJ oyster stock assessment program Eric revised these survey efforts to produce the first comprehensive, reference point managed oyster fishery in the United States (arguably in the world). He did this in full collaboration with the New Jersey industry to help stabilize and expand the fishery. At the time of this move New Jersey was also central (and remains so) to the Mid Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahog fisheries. The federal assessment presented some challenges at that time. Eric started a coordinated joint academic-NMFS-Fishing Industry cooperative research program on these two economically important species in the EEZ, a program remains active to this day in insuring that both fisheries are categorized by NMFS as not overfished and have no overfishing occurring. Eric’s efforts were instrumental in developing industry vessels as platforms for both clam assessment and research needs over the past twenty years. During this same period Eric became the Chief Science Liaison for the NFI (National Fisheries Institute)-Scientific Monitoring Committee and the NFI-Clam Committee, and a Member of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Invertebrate Subcommittee - positions that he still holds. Eric’s efforts in New Jersey were acknowledged in a number of prestigious awards that focus on the academic-research-industry interaction. These included a Certificate of Special US Congressional Recognition for “dedication and service to the commercial and recreational fishing industries” presented by Congressman Frank Lobiando on August 14, 2012, and recognition by a Joint Legislative Resolution by the Senate and Assembly of New Jersey for “meritorious history of leadership and dedication on behalf of the fishing industry and the academic community”, presented August 14, 2012, signed by the President of the New Jersey Senate and the Speaker of the New Jersey House.

Warmer climates called, and Eric moved south again to Mississippi in 2012 to serve as the Director of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs, MS. Eric stepped down from the administrative role in 2014 to return to research and his most recent academic-industry collaboration. Eric, with his now long-time industry collaborators, developed the first and only National Science Foundation (NSF) Industry University Cooperative Research Center focused on marine fisheries – titled the Science Center for Marine Fisheries (SCeMFis, more details at www.scemfis.org). The Center is currently funded for a 5-year period with joint support from NSF and industry – a testament to the value that industry places on Eric’s efforts and products. Indeed, SCeMFis embodies much of Eric’s career philosophy on how cooperative science should be generated – through full engagement with industry and with highest scientific standards and student participation – and that all products should be freely shared with the greater community through peer publication. SCeMFis now supports a wide range of activities varying from clam assessment, development of finfish assessment models and alternatives to risk based catch advise, fisheries economic impacts, and uncertainties in slow growing marine mammal populations and the interactions between marine mammals and fishing operations.



Eric is a prolific writer with 255 peer publications to date and more in the pipeline. These are influential and widely cited. As an example, in 2011 the *Journal of Shellfish Research* announced the 20 most referenced articles published during the 2008-2011 period. Eric first authored or co-authored four of these, including two in the top five.

Eric remains a dynamic researcher and a colleague who leads by example. I am fortunate to have enjoyed a research collaboration with him for the past 20 years. To his students he is a driver with exacting standards, but also someone whose sense of humor and willingness to drag them along into every possible encounter from the deck of a commercial fishing vessel to the management council meetings insures that they will graduate with a sound foundation for their future careers. The academic research – industry interface remains a large part of Eric’s daily efforts to develop and sustain fisheries of many species, very much in the spirit of the efforts of David H. Wallace.

Roger Mann