

Edgartown Shellfish Committee
Tuesday, September 5, 2023, 4:30pm
At the Edgartown Library

Present: Nic Turner, Ryan Smith, David Faber
Shellfish Dept: Rob Morrison, Julie Pringle (recorder)
Absent: Madeline Fisher, Christian Thornton

The meeting of the Edgartown Shellfish Committee was called to order at 4:34pm.
David Faber will serve as Acting Chair.

MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the draft minutes from 7/18/23.

Motion placed on the floor by Ryan to approve the 7/18/23 draft minutes. Nic seconds the motion, no further discussion, vote taken and passed unanimously, 3-0.

SHELLFISH PERMITS & AQUACULTURE LICENSES

None.

MIDDLE FLATS AQUACULTURE AREAS

Rob presented maps that outline the current lease areas in the Middle Flats aquaculture area. The maps were produced using coordinates provided by MA Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), as the coordinates provided by the Select Board's office were inaccurate. Rob stated that the coordinates for the majority of the lease sites are now correct. Liam Cosgrove's site was displayed incorrectly on the map, however Rob received updated coordinates that will be used to update the maps. The goal is to resolve the uncertainty about which commercial growers have been approved for the Middle Flats and where exactly each lease is located. It is helpful to know where each lease is located in case more aquaculturists move gear there.

Currently, Liam Cosgrove is the only one that actively uses a lease in Middle Flats. Liam's lease site is marked with yellow corner buoys, however no other leases in the Middle Flats are marked with physical buoys. Rob stated that Liam Cosgrove expressed interest in an additional lease on the Middle Flats. The Committee discussed if the bylaws allow multiple leases in one growing area. Rob will check to see if the bylaws differentiate between Katama and Middle Flats growing areas, as only one lease site is allowed in Katama and he wasn't sure what the exact wording was for Middle Flats.

Rob stated that Arno Ewing is interested in a Middle Flats lease. Arno requested that his lease be long and skinny, instead of the usual square, to accommodate a kelp growing operation. Rob will talk with Arno about the exact location, after which the lease site would need approval from the Committee, the Select Board, then DMF will conduct a survey and finally Army Corps will have to approve. Rob is hoping to talk to Arno and have a proposed new Middle Flats lease site before the next Committee Meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORT & PROPOGATION PROGRAM UPDATE

Rob acknowledged the contributions of Christian Thornton, who announced his resignation from the Committee and his position as Chair.

Rob reported that it has been a busy and successful propagation season. The oysters were split early and are very healthy. The scallops have grown well and benefited from the second upweller. The department

began thinning the quahogs by planting them in the family area off of Felix Neck. The remainder of the quahogs will be planted in Katama.

DMF announced more closures due to fecal coliform bacteria and poor water quality. Major's Cove in Sengekontacket Pond (areas V16.3 & V16.30) is now classified as Prohibited, which means the Cove is closed to shellfishing year-round instead of seasonally. All areas are tested by DMF a minimum of 5 times annually, and these areas have exceeded the bacteria limits enough times to warrant a closure. Rob stated that he will continue to work with the State to facilitate water testing and he will do whatever he can to minimize or shorten these shellfish sanitation closures.

CAPE POGUE / LITTLE BRIDGE DREDGE SURVEY REPORT

Rob summarized his meeting with Donnie Benefit, the Dredge Operator for the Town. As requested by the Dredge Committee, he took Donnie on the boat to conduct a survey at the Gut and the narrows going into Pocha Pond. Donnie estimated that dredging these areas would remove approximately 7000 cubic yards of sand and take about 10 days. Rob also helped facilitate a dredge survey of the Little Bridge in Sengekontacket Pond. Donnie prefers to dredge the Little Bridge first, as this location is the most weather dependent. Dredging operations will occur outside of the bridge, but not inside. Dredging in the pond would require additional costs for mobilization with crane and trailer, so a more comprehensive plan for dredging within Sengekontacket may occur in the future.

The Committee discussed how the Town is compensated for dredging at the Little Bridge, since it is located within Oak Bluffs. Rob stated that regardless of which town dredging occurs in, dredging outside of Little Bridge is important for improving water flow within the whole pond, which will benefit shellfish resources.

PUBLIC SHELLFISHING DAY IN KATAMA

Emma Green Beach and Nina Ferry from Shellfish Group are doing a Public Shellfishing day at 1pm Sunday September 10 in Katama. It will be a free shellfishing day, where those attending will not require a permit to keep quahogs. Staff from the Shellfish Department and the Shellfish Group will be there to assist and spread public awareness of the work that is done to improve shellfish resources on the island.

SET SCALLOP DATES NEXT MEETING

Both recreational and commercial scallop season dates will be determined at the next meeting. David asked Rob about a scallop survey within Cape Pogue. Rob stated that he conducted an informal survey while collecting scallop broodstock. He observed good survival from last year and estimated that it will be another good season in Cape Pogue, however it is difficult to predict.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

The Committee will meet again on September 19th, 2023. The remainder of the 2023 meetings will be in person at the Edgartown Library on the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

At 5:03pm, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. No further discussion, vote taken and passed unanimously, 3-0.

Minutes submitted by Julie Pringle.