

Edgartown Shellfish Committee
Tuesday, November 14, 2023, 5:00pm
At the Edgartown Library

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

The meeting of the Edgartown Shellfish Committee was called to order at 5:08 pm.
Ryan served as Chair for the meeting until David arrived at 5:15.

SHELLFISH PERMITS AND AQUACULTURE LICENSES

None

MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the draft minutes from 10/17.

Motion placed on the floor by Nic to approve the 10/17/23 draft minutes. Warren seconds the motion, no further discussion, vote taken and passed unanimously, 4-0.

SHELLFISH DEPARTMENT REPORT

Rob reported that the commercial scallop season hasn't been as good as the past two years. Since the commercial season opened on October 30th, 704 10-gallon washbaskets were landed by 20-30 fishermen per day. The conversion factor for washbaskets to bushels is to multiply by 1.5, so 1056 bushels were landed so far this season. In addition to catching less, the scallops are cutting worse than last year. Fishermen are reporting approximately 41 lbs of scallop meat from 6 washbaskets this year compared to 60 lbs last year. There is a lot of grass in Cape Poge, which makes dragging more difficult and is contributing to the reduced landings. The wholesale price of scallops is around \$21/lb.

Additionally, Rob reported that scallop seed is especially abundant this year. Despite this, there haven't been problems with fishermen keeping seed. The Committee discussed the possibility of closing areas due to the high concentration of seed, but since seed is undesirable to cut and sell the Committee decided keep Cape Poge open and discuss again after the holidays. The Committee predicted that the number scallop fishermen will decrease after the holidays.

SHELLFISH PROPAGATION PROGRAM UPDATE

The Department is currently air-drying all the oyster seed and preparing for winter. The oyster seed looks healthy. Rob reported it was a great growing season and there was low mortality. All the scallops and quahogs are all planted.

SENGEKONTACKET POND: EDGARTOWN/ OAK BLUFFS TOWN LINE

Rob has been in communication with the Oak Bluffs and Edgartown Town Administrators, as OB would like to have a joint Shellfish Committee meeting to discuss the town line in Sengekontacket Pond. Rob explained that there are concrete bounds across the Pond that represent the town line, however some of these bounds are inaccurate based on GPS coordinates provided by the Martha's Vineyard Commission. The concrete blocks may have moved over time due to ice. When the Department placed buoys on the MVC GPS points, Edgartown gained

approximately 900 feet. Oak Bluffs is concerned about the shellfish that have been seeded in that area. Chuck and Jason, who both are former OB Shellfish Dept employees, have stated that the disputed area has not been seeded in many years. The Committee discussed how to approach and resolve this.

NEW BUSINESS

FY25 BUDGET

Capital programs requests are due December 1st, which will project expenses for the next 5 years. The propagation program budget has been steady at \$44,000 for many years, and Rob intends to increase it to \$50,000 to account for increased costs and the expansion of the Department's workload. \$39,000 is requested annually for the Town's membership in the Shellfish Group. Funding requests include a warrant article for \$65,000 for a new $\frac{3}{4}$ ton F250 truck to replace the 12 year old Chevy 2500. In fiscal year 2028, Rob will request \$70,000 to replace the $\frac{1}{2}$ ton F150 truck. In FY29 Rob will ask for \$75,000 to replace the Carolina skiff. Committee discussed other projected costs for the next 5 years. Warren provided a history of the Shellfish Department's budget and how little it has changed since the early 90's when the Department began its propagation program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

At 5:50pm, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. No further discussion, vote taken and passed unanimously, 5-0.

Minutes submitted by Julie Pringle.