

DMR Regional Shellfish Meeting
Curtis Memorial Library, 23 Pleasant St., Brunswick

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

SUMMARY NOTES

Participants:

Town Shellfish Programs: Charlie Tetreault, Paul Plummer, Will Owen, Mark Leuchtenberger, Dan Devereaux, Dan Sylvain, and Bob Ernest; DMR Staff: Ari Leach, Katie Miller, Denis Nault, Kohl Kanwit, William Fearn, Bryant Lewis, Mickenzy Breton, and Melissa Britsch; Other: Marissa McMahan, Jessie Batchelder, Dana Morse, Emily Whitmore, Jefferson Oranales, Jessica Gribbon Joyce and Laura Taylor Singer

Introduction:

- DMR is hosting these meetings to provide an opportunity for greater direct communication among folks involved in municipal shellfish and DMR.
- This is in direct response to some of the feedback during the May workshops suggesting that there be more opportunities for people to get together.
- The May workshops hosted by the Shellfish Advisory Council (ShAC) were focused on generating ideas. These DMR regional meetings are to provide an open forum to ask questions and share information about some of the key topics we've heard in each region.
- DMR is planning to make this an annual opportunity. Looking for feedback on meetings.
- DMR's shellfish management program assists towns with managing their flats and shellfish. The area biologists play a key role by helping towns with their conservation areas, reseeding, surveying, town license allocations, shellfish ordinances, warden programs, and a lot more.
- There are other parts of DMR that focus on water quality monitoring, shore access and aquaculture permitting, and other issues that may impact municipal shellfish programs.

DMR Updates:

- DMR staffing – successful in getting three new positions, a Marine Resource Scientist IV and two Marine Resource Scientist Is.
- Shellfish Program will be renamed “Nearshore Marine Resources Program” to better reflect the true scope of all the work that has been under the program for a decade, including seaweed, periwinkles, marine worms and whelks.
- DMR has resources to address some of the questions raised at the ShAC workshops and having additional staff capacity is an important piece.
 - Anticipate offering municipal mini-grants in 2023

- Committed to providing an annual landings report
- The message is clear that Limited Purpose Aquaculture (LPA) licenses are a significant burden and obstacle and DMR is working internally to come up with solutions; this will take time and require legislative changes, but it is being addressed and is a priority.

Taking a Deeper Dive into a Few Key Topics:

Shore Access and Community Solutions - Melissa Britsch, Maine Coastal Program

- Maine Coastal Program (MCP) – within DMR and focuses on planning and community support; fund two municipal planning grants and also support staff in multiple State agencies to provide assistance to communities for things like sea level rise, resilience planning, and comprehensive planning.
- [Shore and Harbor Grants](#) – waterfront planning and how waterfronts are used; planning but not construction, could be a feasibility study but not infrastructure; can help fund economic analysis of the impact of fishing to community; legal research to identify or clarify rights-of-way; anything related to access and a better fit for projects designed to increase access for commercial fishing.
- Grants are a competitive grant with applications typically in February or March; towns do not need to have a comprehensive plan to access funds; currently up to \$50K; grant goes to town, but work can be done by consultant or others.
 - [Gouldsboro Example](#): funded in 2021 to identifying important coves and access points for shellfishing industry; working with Gouldsboro shellfish committee, Maine Coast Heritage Trust and other partners to secure and create access; also raising awareness on why it matters to have those access points.
 - Gouldsboro has ~55 miles of shoreline; first few meetings with harvesters to discuss what needs to be protected – where, what was special about the locations, etc.; harvesters spent hours with volunteers to show the sights – raised the awareness within community, for example DIFW – getting word out opened the conversation.
 - Greater Portland Council of Governments and Manomet were funded in 2022 for a similar project working with Georgetown, Brunswick, Harpswell and Yarmouth to identify existing and historic access.
- [Coastal Communities Grant](#) – towns need to have a comprehensive plan; competitive grants focusing on comprehensive planning and community plans for sea level rise, coastal flooding, and green infrastructure.
- [Working Waterfront Access Protection Program](#) - part of Land for Maine’s Future program; permanently protects working waterfront through a restrictive covenant on the deed that prevents property from being redeveloped in ways that aren’t conducive to commercial fishing; typically used for lobster co-ops or family docks but can also be used to protect town docks or walk-in access to a property (similar to an easement).

- [Resources for Preserving Commercial Fishing Access](#) – by MCP
- [Preserving Access to the Intertidal](#): A guide for coastal stakeholders and municipalities - Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group

Discussion:

- A question was raised about eligibility in multiple years if receiving a grant. Yes, a town can reapply each year.
 - A recommendation was made to reach out to Maine Realtors Association to help them get the word out about the importance of maintaining traditional access. It was noted that some attempts have been made to reach out to realtors.
 - Harpswell Committee held a landowner appreciation day that was effective to educate landowners and maintain good will.
 - Another suggestion was getting folks out on the flats to see how rich the environment is and what clamming is really about.
 - Examples– Gouldsboro has done this as partnership with Schoodic Institute and the Sumner Memorial High School Pathways students; Arrowsic holds an annual “clam camp”; Gouldsboro also did a learn-to-clam day with local residents.
 - There is an idea being discussed to add shellfish harvesting activity and historical right-of-way access as a disclosure on the homeowner disclosure forms, needs follow up with the state or Realtors Association.
 - Coastal Grant – requires Active Comprehensive Plan or enrolled in Community Resilience Partnership program.
 - Melissa Britsch can be used as a resource to vet ideas and help put you in touch with other resources regarding waterfront access.
 - Maine Coast Fisherman’s Association is developing pamphlets about fishing heritage in Maine and the character of the Maine coast, should make sure there is shellfish representation.
- **Water Quality and Pollution Monitoring** - Bryant Lewis, Western Maine Growing Area Program Supervisor
- Water Quality Program has two parts of program – water sampling (fecal coliform detection) and shoreline surveys every 12 years. Also may conduct shoreline surveys for “hot spots”.
 - DMR can provide support and guidance for municipalities who may be doing more sampling.
 - DMR goal is to classify waters with fecal coliform scores. DMR cannot do the microbial source tracking (MST) sampling that can determine source (human, animal, birds, etc.). This is done at a laboratory at UNH. DMR can help support towns with MST efforts.

- [Maine Shellfish Closures & Monitoring Data website](#)
 - Multiple layers available such as growing area classifications, wet storage, aquaculture leases and LPAs, emergency flood closures, conservation closures, biotoxin closures, etc.
 - Can click on sampling stations to get current water quality information
 - P90 water quality score is most popular; P90 only calculated each year; color coded – red, black, orange, yellow and green
 - Map shows P90 scores generated from last 5 years; Value of 31 or below is the approved limit
 - Additional reasons beyond P90 score why an area may remain closed
 - Do not currently have aquaculture health zones – this public health map is different than the aquaculture map online
 - App through ArcGIS to target your current location
 - Dots are all locations for grab water samples, not a continuous monitoring station (e.g. remote sensor); many samples collected through volunteers
 - Link also available to DMR Open Data site – has the data available for every layer that is on the Shellfish website
 - Can download the information in several different formats (CVS, KML, etc.); not individual sample data but there is discussion about adding this – participants agreed that this would be useful
 - Aquaculture – contact information might be good to add to spreadsheet – will pass along to Aquaculture Program
 - Separate webpage: Marine Phytoplankton Data and Forecast – shows phytoplankton data and predicts PSP toxicity, real time trends are more important for phytoplankton tracking
- ⇒ **Create a video tutorial to walk people through the website**
- ⇒ **Consider adding individual sample data**
- ⇒ **Aquaculture program should consider adding contact information from lease holders to downloadable spreadsheet – DMR will pass along suggestion**
- ⇒ **Consider adding non-harmful algal blooms to the phytoplankton website**

Round Table Q & A

Several issues and comments were raised during the open question and answer session, and these are generally placed into categories below.

Reflections on shellfish mortality event this summer –

- What did you learn from your response?
 - This happened before in Brunswick; responded by collecting samples and noting areas of occurrence; samples sent to Kennebec Bio. and they concluded that it was lack of dissolved oxygen; cost ~\$1200 in staff time and lab fees; led to discussions of use of pesticides with landowners
 - Brunswick would test again as they have funding set aside
 - Number of factors that need to be considered to determine what is the source of the die-off from year to year
- Are there any physiological characteristics of low oxygen in the clams?
 - Harvesters have provided anecdotal information that shellfish function differently; harvesters are the ones to call in a problem
 - Soft-shell clams are most sensitive because they are constantly pumping so the first ones to react to low DO
 - DMR has not had a pathologist on board for almost 20 years and is hoping to bring on someone to fill this role.
- DMR appreciates that the towns are communicating if they see a problem.
- DO meters are relatively inexpensive – DMR Public Health does not monitor DO, but Marine Science does some sampling for menhaden impacts.
- Working toward real-time toxic plankton monitoring on site:
 - DMR has focused on applicable real-time technology – working with Bigelow on probes specific to identify presence/absence of toxic algae
 - NOAA has large source of federal money for HABs

Communication -

- Would be beneficial for DMR to give municipalities a bit of a heads up when water quality is looking a bit “off”.
- DMR does a periodic check of high scores and a spot check to investigate.
- Towns could have eyes on the issue quickly if DMR communicates.
- All towns may not have the same capacity.
- DMR has heard that more communication to towns is needed, and this meeting is an example.
- DMR – is trying to find ways to streamline process to make water quality data more readily available in real-time.
- Are ways towns can be supportive of DMR?

- Intertidal Data Portal – Judy Colby-George of Spatial Alternatives has worked with several others to develop an online tool for tracking information about coastal issues and resources.
- DMR – having conversations about how best to get notifications out and see how user friendly we can make it.
- Key issue to all website information is maintenance!
- Interactive map is best source and getting people to understand and use the tool is important – educating harvesters.
 - ⇒ **Explore ways to give towns early indications if P90 scores look concerning**
 - ⇒ **Can the “notify me” only be for the areas you are interested in through DMR Gov delivery email/texts?**
 - ⇒ **Towns/placenames would be much more valuable to help let people know if they should read the email**
 - ⇒ **Offer a tutorial at the shellfish committee meetings on mapping website**
 - ⇒ **Create a YouTube video tutorial and send out to email list**
 - ⇒ **Offer a link to share the map of what folks are viewing on their screen with each other to help with communication; half the battle is trying to help harvesters navigate the site**
 - ⇒ **Send out a communication to towns once the DMR staffing is set to let people know who to contact**
 - ⇒ **Update Conservation Closures more often than monthly**
 - ⇒ **Add a share button to each legal notice**