



Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts  
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April 2014 Report

I attended the National Shellfisheries Association's annual conference. Marty Chintala (US Environmental Protection Agency) and I gave a power point presentation titled; "Using a System Level Approach to Bay Scallop Enhancement and Management". The talk was based on how we have been trying to manage the Lagoon Pond bay scallop fishery.

There were several presentations on "living shore lines" and "storm resilient coasts", especially salt marsh restoration and its role in nitrogen attenuation. I discussed at length the possibility of EPA doing a relatively large salt marsh restoration project in Sengekontacket Pond in 2015 so they can better evaluate the natural attenuation services the salt marsh provides. They would be primarily requesting funding through their own budget process.

Also at the meeting was a presentation that reported the discovery of a new quahog disease. It was found on the cape, so it is nearby. There is not a whole lot known about it, but it is believed to be caused by a virus. The symptoms are similar to a disease that has been found throughout the northeast in soft shell clams. Also it seems to be only fatal in the spring and early summer. There is no indication of any threat to human health.

Jason has been working on the field gear preparing for the coming season. The larger outboard is on our scallop boat, but it is still at Don's Marine not quite finished. Hopefully we will have a boat in the water next week.

I have received three quotes for the annual quahog relay. The lowest bid was \$13.00 per bushel. I am planning on getting 500 bushels and planting them in Sengekontacket Pond. I have sent quahogs from last year's relay off to the Division of Marine Fisheries for confirmation that the meats no longer have elevated bacterial levels. I anticipate scheduling the relay for early May. We need to close the areas to be planted with relay stock on May 10th. These will be sections 2, 3, 6, and 7.

The Oak Bluffs Harbor will be closed to shellfishing on May 15<sup>th</sup> due to its conditionally approved status with the Division of Marine Fisheries.

I recommend scheduling the following sections in Sengekontacket Pond to be opened for this year.

Section 4	May 3
Section 5	June 28
Section 1	August 2

Vineyard Scuba will be sponsoring a diver cleanup for the Oak Bluffs Harbor for May 17<sup>th</sup>. This will be their fifth year.

The Vineyard Conservation Society's Beach Cleanup is April 19. Volunteers will be at Eastville Point Beach, State Beach (meet at Little Bridge), Inkwell and Pay Beach.

On April 14<sup>th</sup> we received the waiver for dredging the little bridge channel from Ma Department of Environmental Protection. The consultant, CLE Engineering, has prepared the

request for bids and will be sent out and published in the State Register issued on April 23rd. A time line for the project has been drawn up and the dredging must be done by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

I have received an early draft of the Upper Lagoon Pond report from the School of Marine and Science Technology (SMAST). It appears that we can increase the natural attenuation of nitrogen in the pond. The pond gets salt water incursions through a discharge pipe through the dike. That pipe runs along the bottom of the pond to an underwater standpipe that was designed to draw off salt water incursion. The stand pipe is about a yard tall and there is now a large salt water lens at the bottom of the pond. The fresh water and salt water are not mixing and the saltwater lens has very low dissolved oxygen. The preliminary recommendations are to install a flapper valve or check valve on the seaward end of the pipe, reduce the height of the standpipe to shrink the lens, to consider some sort of aerator to hasten the bottom to change from the low oxygen and encourage an aerobic breakdown of the nitrogen so it is released as a gas and not transported into the saltwater Lagoon pond.

At the Annual Town Meeting last week our FY15 budget was passed. The budget was increased slightly to fund a part time year round position but eliminated the funding for the part time seasonal position. This is progress but this department is still not up to the staff level we had in 2008. Also at the meeting the request for funding to conduct a four year monitoring of the healthier eelgrass near the Lagoon drawbridge and to use that data as a comparison to the monitoring in Farm Pond. The other important vote was passing the new fertilizer regulations under the authority of the Board of Health. These regulations were a low hanging fruit in our effort to reduce the nitrogen levels in our ground water and coastal ponds. The regulations limit the number of times and the application rate of fertilizer used on turf (lawns).

The MA Public Health and MA Division of Marine Fisheries have enacted restrictions to commercial fishing for oysters. The development of these restrictions was required by the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference. Currently the regulations do not apply to recreational fishing, so that does not currently affect our development of a put and take oyster fishery in Sengekontacket pond. Woods Hole Sea Grant and Cape Cod Extension have produced a flyer to inform recreational shellfishermen on the safe handling of their catch. I have received 1,000 copies and asked that they be offered to anyone when they get their shellfish license.

At the invitation of Kevin Clayton, the Environmental police officer assigned to Dukes County, all island Shellfish Constables met with him. We discussed several issues and how we locally handle infractions of the shellfish regulations. The one point he stressed and asked the constables to help with is enforcement of the commercial shellfishermen to have their catch tagged prior to landing them. Apparently, there have been some questions of where some stock has come from. The best way to insure the right information is on the tag is to inspect it as it is landed.

Respectfully submitted,