



Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Shellfish Department

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August 2020 Report

The past month's focus has been primarily in the field. In mid-July all propagated species experienced a substantial increase in growth rates. The majority of our soft shell clams have been planted into Lagoon Pond and Sengekontacket Pond. The "smalls" remaining in the upweller will have reached a viable size in the next week or two. Last seasons overwintered oysters have been seeded out into Sengekontacket. The largest of this season's oysters are in excess of one inch. We will start to put them into bottom cages next week. Quahogs have been thinned and we will start to pull the nursery rafts at the end of this month or beginning of next depending on growth and weather. The Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group has been providing us with bay scallops for the past four weeks with still more to come. Scallop lines are placed in Sengekontacket Pond off of Little Gravel Island and in the Lagoon off of Sandy Point and in front of the Hughes Hatchery. I have put a sample set into the tidal upweller in Sengekontacket and they are growing nicely. I intend to compare them with the scallops on lines in October to see the pros and cons of this growing technique. All scallop sanctuary cages have collected spat which has transitioned through its larval phase and developed shells. All scallops will be seeded out in October and November.

Through water sampling we have identified three algae blooms in Lagoon Pond and one in Sengekontacket. They have been made up of primarily harmless phytoplankton. Toxic species were identified in the bloom in Majors Cove area of Sengekontacket but the concentrations were so low they are not considered harmful to humans or shellfish. All of the blooms have been relatively small and localized.

Our predator control program has been shown a slight reduction in green and spider crabs with a notable increase in blue claws. Blue claws and other beneficial predators are always returned to the water generally outside of the ponds.

After months of mechanical problems with our Sengekontacket boat, we finally have both boats functioning and servicing the ponds. I have arranged to take possession of the engine on the Fire Department's rescue boat when they replace it for next season. It has slightly more horsepower, has seen little use, and has been well maintained. I plan to retain the current engine as a backup. Thank you to Bob Whritenour for putting me in touch with Chief Greene, and to Deputy Chief Rose for the information.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Fisher
Oak Bluffs Shellfish Constable