



Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Shellfish Department

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Charles Fisher
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Herring Warden

September 2020 Report

Late September marks the beginning of the end of our growing season. Grow out gear is being removed and we are starting to see the results of the season. I reconsidered caging the oysters for now and decided to focus our efforts on the quahog rafts. We have pulled over half of them so far and seeded them throughout recreational areas in Sengekontacket and Lagoon Pond. The remaining quahog seed will go into areas favored by commercial fisherman in Sengekontacket, Lagoon Pond and Oak Bluffs Harbor. Once we are finished with the quahog rafts we will get back to putting the oysters in bottom cages for the winter and start clearing scallop lines in both ponds. Our scallop nursery cages have been removed. The spat collected from the cages varied between the ponds, but both ponds were very productive. The amount yielded from the Lagoon was greater than I have seen since I have been with the Department and the size of the seed from Sengekontacket was remarkable, some were in excess of two inches across!

I have submitted a request to the Selectman for opening dates for scallop season for consideration at their next meeting. Pending their approval, the dates will be: Sengekontacket recreational 10/17 and commercial 10/26, Lagoon recreational 11/14 and commercial 11/16. I have seen a few small areas of natural sets in both ponds but I am not expecting the harvest to be much better than last season. I am considering removing/relocating the designated dip net area in the Lagoon as there has been few harvestable adults in the area off of Lagoon Road.

The primary topic at meetings of the Lagoon Pond Association (LPA) has been the MV Shipyard's plan to expand their services to include a 48 slip marina in the west arm of the Lagoon. LPA is strongly opposed to this project; you may have seen the blue lawn signs around the Lagoon. More information on this can be found here <https://www.lagoonpondassoc.org/shipyard>. Another concern that is shared by both LPA and Friends of Sengekontacket (FOS) is the apparent disregard of some boating regulations in the ponds by an increased amount of recreational boaters this season. LPA is working on a project to inform boaters of regulations. FOS is drafting a letter in an attempt to have "no wake" buoys placed in Sengekontacket. I have spoken with the Harbormaster about a few options. He recognizes there is a problem and is willing to help however possible. FOS and the County will be working to replace the split rail fencing in the parking areas at both bridges and some of the entrances to the beach. The County will also be asking the Highway Department to deliver some fill to the little bridge lot. The County intends to cover the expense of the fill and have volunteers spread it where needed.



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We were not awarded the MVP grant for planning work to replace the Farm Pond culvert. We have been given advice on how to improve the application and have discussed the project with CZM. They understand the importance of the project and have offered assistance on working with other involved agencies and moving it forward. More meetings are up coming.

Quahogs have been abundant this year. Most of the recreational and commercial harvest has come from Sengekontacket. While the resource is plentiful, I intend to resume the relay program in the spring as long as pandemic precautions and budgetary concerns continue to ease.

Shellfishing permit sales are slightly lower than last year's total by about 40 to date. I think there will be additional sales as scallop and oyster seasons open. Many thanks again to Carrie Blair for making these sales happen, often times on weekends.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Fisher
Oak Bluffs Shellfish Constable