



Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Shellfish Department

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Charles Fisher
Shellfish Constable
Herring Warden

July 2021 Report

There has been a modification to the reclassifications of mooring fields in Lagoon Pond. The status of the mooring field off of Lagoon Rd has been changed from “Closed to Shellfishing” from May 15- October 31 to “Open to Shellfishing” year round. This area remains classified as “Conditionally Approved”. The mooring field at Madeiras Cove remains in the “Closed” status during the boating season. Shellfishing is allowed at Madeiras Cove along the shoreline, the closure only affects the area within the mooring field, and a small section outside of it for dilution purposes. Please see the map on our web page or contact me to help with understanding.

We have started our Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) early monitoring program. A few blooms have been observed in both Sengekontacket and Lagoon Ponds. These blooms have not contained toxic substances in concentrations to be concerned with. The biggest issue with these nontoxic blooms is the probability of hypoxic conditions resulting from die-off of dense blooms sinking to the bottom and decomposing. We continue to assist the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Martha’s Vineyard Commission (MVC) with sampling for water quality. MVC has started to include monitoring for cyanobacteria in Farm, Sengekontacket, and Lagoon Ponds as well as Sunset Lake. Cyanobacteria has not been found in Oak Bluffs waters as of yet.

I am very grateful to Friends of Sengekontacket (FOS) for continuing their intern program and to Lagoon Pond Association (LPA) for their donation to the Town to fund a part time seasonal Deputy for the Shellfish Department. Meredith Langmuir is the FOS intern. She has been with us for two weeks now and has been a great addition. She has primarily been working with Marissa Quell, our full time Deputy, on propagation of oysters and soft shell clams along with our HAB monitoring and predator control programs in Sengekontacket. Mike Stenz, whose position is funded through LPA, started over the holiday weekend. While his focus is on the Lagoon, he is getting up to speed on all departmental programs and will be scheduled until 6pm providing needed coverage into the evening.

We have been receiving shellfish seed over the past month. This season I ordered 500,000 of both oysters and steamers from off island hatcheries. The Martha’s Vineyard Shellfish Group has had another great year or quahog production providing Oak Bluffs with 2,250,000 quahog seed to date and scallop seed has been coming in from them for the past two weeks.

Our predator control program continues to see a large increase in the numbers of blue crabs, especially in Sengekontacket. Blue crabs are ravenous predators of shellfish, especially bay scallops as they lay on the bottom and are often agape. Anyone who is interested in assisting with this program is encouraged to get their shellfishing permit, a net, and a bucket. State regulations can be found here <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/commercial-lobster-crab-regulations>.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Fisher
Oak Bluffs Shellfish Constable