



Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts

Shellfish Department

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Charles Fisher
Shellfish Constable
Herring Warden

October 2021 Report

October marks the busiest month for the Shellfish Department. This past weekend was the opening of bay scallop season. There were not as many people shellfishing as in years past as most understand the resource is in decline. But those who were there with peep sights came out with scallops in their baskets and smiles on their faces.

Marco Petricone has been appointed as our full time Deputy Shellfish Constable. Marco has been doing well in the full time position and is very grateful for the appointment. Mike Stenz is currently working as our part time year round deputy.

We have completed our quahog and soft shelled clam propagation for the season. Soft shell clams were the first to reach size this year. They usually grow very quickly in the harbor based upweller and this year was no exception. The Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group (MVSG) provided Oak Bluffs with over two million quahog seed this year. Some of them were slow growing due to an early season algal bloom in the Lagoon. The effected quahogs were left to grow a few weeks longer than normal and most of them caught up in size. Both species has been seeded out and the gear has been stored for the season. We took part in a fall Quahog relay this year; over 225 bushels of quahogs were brought over and placed into sections 4, 5, and 6 of Sengekontacket Pond. These sections will be closed until April of next year.

Our scallop sanctuaries in Sengekontacket have been emptied and most will be removed by the end of this week. Early monitoring showed little evidence of spawning, but upon pulling the spat bags I saw evidence of three spawns. Judging from the size, the last spawn occurred earlier this month. I plan to leave one of the sanctuaries in a few weeks longer to see if there is another spawning event. We have been monitoring the sanctuaries in Lagoon Pond and will start to remove them next week. All of the scallop seed from MVSG has been growing nicely in both ponds. We will start to remove the lines, seed some out and over winter the rest next week.

Most of our oysters have been caged for the winter. We received a round of late season oysters from MVSG. They have been growing nicely and will be removed from their upweller by the end of this month so the upweller can be hauled and stored as soon as possible. We celebrated the Library's Maritime Month with an outreach program; about a dozen volunteers met us at Pecoy Point to remove last year's oysters from bottom cages and bags. Then they helped us seed them out into the oyster area in Sengekontacket. This program was enjoyed by all. I look forward to next year's Maritime



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Month's events. Another enjoyable outreach event this month was with a special needs class from the high school. They are working on a segment titled "working on the water." The class met me at Pecoy Point where we showed them some of the propagation work we do and talked about the various jobs that are supported by the shellfish in our town. The students really enjoyed the hands on scallop and oyster displays.

Earlier this week I had a debrief call to discuss the CZM Coastal Resiliency grant that we were not awarded for the Farm Pond culvert project. I was assured that the project is worthy of the grant funds, received guidance on next steps, and offered assistance on coordination with multiple stakeholder organizations. This project is going to take a lot more work but I believe in the need for it and that someday we will be driving over an enlarged culvert designed to properly flush the pond.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Fisher