

Orleans Shellfish & Waterways Improvement Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Attendance: Don Baker (Chairman), Mark Mathison (vice-chair), Judy Scanlon, Bill Mitchell, Jack Moran, Rich Tyldesley, David Slack, Dave Dunsford (Selectmen Liaison), Dawson Farber (Shellfish Constable & Harbormaster)

The meeting was brought to order by Don @ 7:01 PM.

Dawson gave his report: entire Nauset Estuary closed due to red tide. Count is extremely high & the bloom is visible to the eye. Testing will continue. Fin fishing & lobstering not affected.

Humans are the only mammal reacting adversely to the toxins.

Voters at Town Meeting approved funds for the launch ramp at River Rd. and the outer docks at Rock Harbor.

48 mooring permits turned over, a 100% increase over the previous year.

Don continued with the agenda asking for comments on Sandy MacFarlane's presentation on shellfish enhancement. Most of the remainder of the meeting was devoted to this topic: David Slack commented that Sandy gave a very good discussion but that he was hoping for more actionable approaches.

Rich asked Dawson about current shellfish propagation and its related budget. Dawson replied \$18,000.00 is budgeted for propagation, twice what it used to be. Permit fees are not dedicated to planting but rather to the General Fund.

Jack thought that the town would vote more funds if provided with potential benefits of increased propagation. Dawson replied that increased propagation wouldn't draw more of the public to shellfishing because there's plenty around now. For instance, two bushels of steamers can be dug on a Pleasant Bay tide and there are Family Areas full of quahogs. Additionally, he said increased oyster propagation was impractical because of lack of manpower and, what would it bring the town anyway? There's little general interest in shellfishing.

David Slack said there was not a lack of fishermen but rather a lack of wild stock to harvest.

Dawson replied that David was rude to Sandy at the last meeting and should apologize.

Don agreed that recreational shellfishing was down but not due to lack of animals.

Dawson stressed the cyclical nature of shellfishing and mentioned the eider which took a huge toll on mussels this past winter.

Mark opined that from a cultural, social, or economic view, people have a different attitude toward shellfishing than in the past.

Don asked if there was any way to reasonably increase shellfish stock in Orleans. Dawson replied in the affirmative but that it was risky. There's a balancing decision as to how much money to invest in seed (and what size seed?) versus how much to invest in labor to get the seed up to plantable size to survive.

In reply to another question, Dawson stated his Dept. purchases annually about 500,000 quahogs & 350,000 or so oysters for eventual broadcast in the wild.

Dawson outlined the various propagation techniques his Dept. uses to raise seed for eventual transplant and survival in the wild.

Don stated he doesn't think the Town should raise seed to transplant for commercial diggers. Who is propagation for? Dawson: Quahog propagation benefits mainly the commercial sector but it's available for everyone.

Rich asked how successful Dawson thought his propagation techniques & Dawson estimated a loss of approximately 20% before transplant to harvest areas.

Rich asked why not buy 2 million animals to which Dawson responded that large seed would be cost prohibitive and small seed would require too much labor in such quantity. Dawson stated most Cape towns have separate shellfish departments. Eastham has 2 employees devoted to oyster culture at Salt Pond although the Hemenway operation was shut down after cost benefit analysis.

David Slack added that Henry Lind provided upweller dock space and electricity at Rock Harbor to Cape Cod Bay growers.

Don and Judy indicated the Town had lost not only its Shellfish Biologist but its dedication to shellfish in general.

Don asked the Board where it should go from here. Rich said any attempt at a decision lacked so many data points as to be presently impossible but that we should continue to study the issue.

Judy asked Dawson what his dream project would be. He said he'd be happy to double his propagation budget but that no clear goal, avenue, or mission presents itself. He reiterated he won't run a volunteer program because it's too labor intensive for him.

Bill thought we should revisit the issue on an annual basis but table for now.

Don asked Dave Dunsford if there was a need for a full time biologist for water quality monitoring in connection with meeting Total Daily Maximum Load limits. Dave replied there was a need for monitoring but that the Count specifics were not yet decided upon.

Judy reported on this year's Herring Run thus far: slow so far. 74 herring counted by the standard protocol between April 1 and Sunday May 8. Many more were seen at the top and bottom but weren't subject to count. A collection system for counting glass eels is being tested

for the State this year. Preliminary data indicate a higher than expected count. Final data will be sent to the State for their survey.

Dawson reported he expects the fish ladder to be replaced within the next 2 years.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Slack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "S".

David Slack