

## Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group Draft Meeting Summary

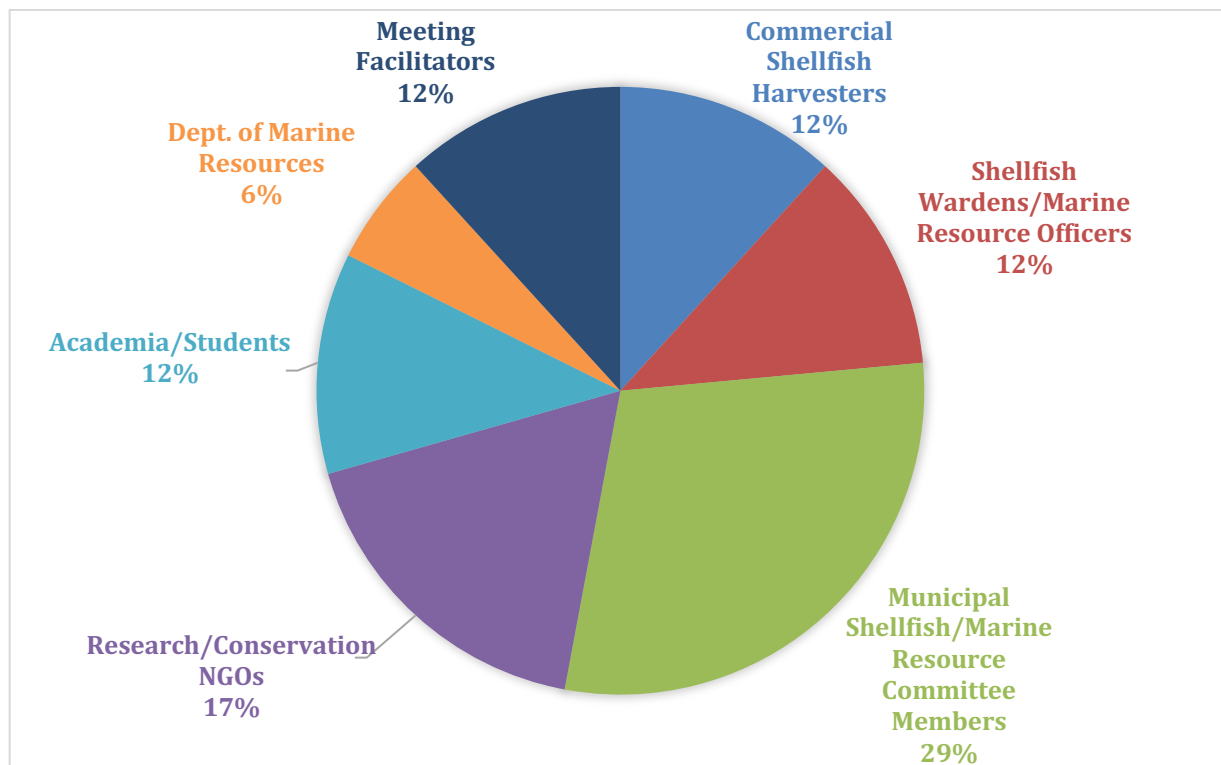


**Date:** April 21, 2021

**Location:** Webinar

**Time:** 5-6:30 PM

**Participants:** Charles Tetreau (Marine Resource Conservation Officer and Harbormaster, Freeport), Kevin Oliver (Harvester and Yarmouth/North Yarmouth Shellfish Committee), Nate Orff (Harvester and Chair, Scarborough Shellfish Conservation Commission), Ben Tupper (Yarmouth/North Yarmouth Shellfish Committee), Madelyn Hennessey (West Bath Board of Selectmen), Ruth Indrick (Kennebec Estuary Land Trust), Lisa Margonelli (Arrowsic Shellfish Conservation Commission), Dan Devereaux Coastal Resources Manager, Brunswick), Mary Ann Nahf (Harpwell Marine Resources Committee), Sara Risley (University of Maine, Darling Marine Center), Karin Sadtler (Arrowsic Shellfish Conservation Committee), Kohl Kanwit (DMR Bureau of Public Health), Ari Conterato (U California Davis, Anthropologist), Anne Hayden (Manomet), Marissa McMahan (Manomet), Madeline Tripp (AmeriCorps Resilience Corps), and Jessica Joyce (Tidal Bay Consulting and Shellfish Advisory Council). See Figure 1 for stakeholder affiliation.



**Figure 1. Stakeholder Affiliation (n=17)**

## **Welcome and review mission of the CBRSWG + agenda**

Jessica gave a brief overview of the mission of the Casco Bay Regional Shellfish Working Group and the agenda.

## **Town sharing**

The following towns offered updates on the focus of the shellfish management programs and the status of their conservation program.

1. Harpswell: They continue to work on building and preparing to launch their tidal upweller this spring. The Committee is coordinating with Dan Devereaux (Brunswick) to learn about their quahog enhancement (seeding) project, as they plan to start seeding the flats this year. They are also planning to broaden their surveys to account for species that are coming more prevalent in the mud flats.
2. Yarmouth: They have their first survey planned in April. They are requiring conservation hours this license year. The Committee developed a new conservation program in their ordinance where prospective license holders can participate in conservation activities and gain points towards acquiring a new commercial license (when available). Town soft-shell landing numbers from 2020 are low, especially in the economic impact per digger.
3. Brunswick: They are planning to survey their flats this spring. First, they use airboats to assess which flats to survey to find the seed beds and other productive areas, and then map them on Google Earth before conducting the surveys. They survey for seed which they've been doing for ten years, also using the airboat. They are continuing to work on a quahog reseeding project that they have funding for through the Maine Shellfish Restoration and Resilience Fund. They are planning to deploy seed that was overwintered. They floating nursery was a lot of work so they are getting larger quahog seed from Downeast Institute (DEI) this year (~250,000). The Town has struggled to get enough volunteers to help with these projects. They have a Town intern this year working on growing out the larger quahog seed in a solar powered upweller. They are also working on developing a shellfish development plan through mapping the intertidal with various densities of shellfish resources, seed beds, etc., and will use this to identify beds where the shellfish resource is declining. They have restarted in-person meetings this spring (socially-distanced) since meetings count towards points for licenses. There are no changes to their conservation points system this year.
4. Scarborough: The Committee is recommending the Town Council amend a town ordinance to allow for more reserved parking for fishermen at the town landing. They require 12-hours of conservation for each clammer. They have some crab kills and also plan to survey 12 areas within their flats in May/June and September/October, after a

break last year due to the pandemic. Harvesters are signing up to participate in the surveys, even though it's not specifically required. The price of clams is high right now.

5. West Bath: The Committee has been meeting in person, and the primary concern at this time is raking for quahogs that is occurring in the intertidal. State-licensed harvesters are taking quahogs in the intertidal, close to the extreme low water mark (whereas they should only operate in the subtidal). This presents an enforcement concern since raking is not allowed in the intertidal, and they would need town issued-licenses. The warden has given up writing tickets because they don't result in convictions. It was noted that there is the same problem in Harpswell and Brunswick. Eelgrass deters rakers where it occurs but the current value of quahogs (~32¢/piece) creates incentive for rakers.
6. Freeport: They are starting up with the conservation point requirement again this spring. The main Committee focus currently, is a review of the residency requirements in their ordinance. Affordable housing in Freeport (and Cumberland County in general) is challenging to secure, so the Committee discussed options to relax their residency requirements while still maintaining the State requirement to allocate 10% of licenses for non-residents.
7. Arrowsic: They currently have a conservation closure that protects clams that were seeded and netted four years ago, and they are discussing whether to remove the closure. They do plan to survey the shellfish this year; however, their clambers are older and from out of town, so they have a difficult time getting enough volunteers to conduct surveys. They have done some green crab trapping, and also run a Clam Camp for children to teach them about various topics in the intertidal, which is very popular and has expanded to include adults.

### **Shellfish database survey results**

Madeline gave a brief presentation on the results from the needs assessment survey conducted this winter that will inform development of a shellfish database. The survey had responses from all 13 member communities, with a diverse range of roles within the shellfish community represented. We collected data on the current role of data/information in municipal shellfish management, including the primary focus of shellfish committees (top responses included conservation activities, predation, and municipal management), and information currently used in decision-making (top responses included license allocations, local knowledge, and shellfish surveys). About 70% or more of respondents expressed support for an interactive, online shellfish data resource with the ability to map layers of data, download data files, and print local maps. Some of the datasets that respondents expressed interest in having access to include: fecal coliform/P90 scores, shellfish growing areas, conservation closures, water quality data, failing septic systems, point source pollution, and public access points. While some of these are already available from various sources, the data portal will organize data into map

viewers based on actionable topics, such as conservation activity siting, finding and fixing pollution sources, monitoring habitat change, and evaluating competing uses in the intertidal.

A discussion followed her presentation:

- There was a suggestion to map the transition from the intertidal to the subtidal zone. If consistent across towns, this may help address some of the concerns raised earlier.
  - We don't believe these data are currently available in a GIS-format; however, as there is interest, the WG will look into this request.
  - Another suggestion was to use a drone and photography with GPS to map the extreme low tides.

### **Discussion on CBRSWG projects**

#### Conservation Activities

Madeline shared a list of shellfish conservation activities compiled from annual shellfish reports of towns in Casco Bay:

- Green crab trapping
- Predator netting
- Recruitment boxes
- Seeding (Soft Shell Clam or Quahog)
- Growing seed for enhancement activities
- Transplanting and/or relaying clams
- Shellfish surveys (Soft Shell and Quahog)
- Predator surveys and/or monitoring
- Seasonal harvesting closures
- Identifying and mitigating pollution sources
- Brushing

Madeline explained that for today, she'd like feedback on whether the list is complete. After the list is finalized, she is going to reach out to members of the WG to inquire what activities they have tried, and which ones are effective (or not). She will also conduct a literature review to see if there is any data or information that is publicly available on the efficacy of these activities or others.

- There was a comment on the need for better outreach to educate the public and the town councils about the economic benefits that the shellfish industry provides for their communities. Building better public relations could be a form of conservation activity to earn conservation points.

- It was pointed out that judging effectiveness needs to take into account all factors affecting the resource, not just the conservation activity. For example, closing areas for conservation does not keep wormers out of these areas.

### Ecological Survey

Marissa shared Manomet's plans for developing a new ecological survey technique for the intertidal. The survey will build on the protocol in the Maine Shellfish Handbook to include, in addition to soft-shell clams, quahogs and other commercial shellfish species. This reflects the fact that municipalities are expanding the species addressed by their ordinances. The survey will also include options to survey predators (e.g., green crabs, MRW and moon snails) as well as other commercial species (e.g., blood and sand worms). It could also include algae cover, sediment types, conservation practices, and other factors that could impact shellfish resources. The ecological survey will have a modular form so that towns can address ecologically relevant factors as well as their capacity for completing surveys.

- There was a question about surveying for quahogs; Marissa noted that the same technique can be used as for soft shell clams except that a conversion from per volume to per piece will need to be made. Dan Devereaux mentioned that Chris Heinig surveyed quahogs in Brunswick in 2015 and as a result 11 licenses were saved that would have been cut if they relied on soft shell data alone. Marissa described a 'bioblitz', a one-day, visual survey of the flats to catalogue all species identified. It could be used to identify specific species or factors for further surveying.
  - There was a question about whether there were any shellfish survey recording forms that include species other than soft-shell clams, and perhaps a field for sediment type. After a brief discussion, the WG offered to develop a slightly modified version of the current DMR survey form that includes other species and sediment types. Scarborough developed waterproof survey forms with the general area, abundance information and other details, although they found it wasn't being well utilized.
  - There was a comment that Yarmouth is considering adding a multispecies license to their ordinance, although their Shellfish Commission needs more data about shellfish resources before making a decision.

## Announcements

- The Working Group has a new website that features a calendar page, announcements, and other resources, including guidance documents for municipalities:  
[www.cascobayregionalshellfishworkinggroup.org](http://www.cascobayregionalshellfishworkinggroup.org)
- DMR Shellfish Advisory Council Meeting, April 29: 1- 4 pm
  - <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/about/councils/shellfish/index.html>
- Proposals for the Maine Coastal Program (MCP) Shore and Harbor Planning Grants (FY22) are due May 3rd. The MCP is seeking grant proposals for FY2022 that support municipal and regional projects in Maine's Coastal Zone. Funds may be used for development of plans for waterfront facilities and amenities, harbor and mooring plans, waterfront vulnerability assessments and resiliency plans, development of regulatory and non-regulatory approaches to waterfront conservation and improvement, development of planning studies for public and working access, development of plans and designs for harbor improvements, and development of management plans for municipal waterfront facilities.
  - <https://www.maine.gov/dmr/mcp/grants/shore-and-harbor-planning-grants.html>
- Anne Hayden announced her plans to retire at the end of June. Dr. Marissa McMahan from Manomet will be taking her place. She will be missed!

## Next Steps

- We will prepare and distribute a meeting summary and post a recording of the webinar online
- Presentations to town council/board of selectmen
  - We are available to give presentations in your town on the ecological, economic, and cultural importance of the shellfish fishery.
- Shared equipment library
  - If you have ideas or needs for shared equipment, please send them along. We are still working on researching recommendations from our last meeting.
- Spring/summer demonstrations and field work
  - Stay tuned for more information on opportunities to get in the field this summer.
- Next meeting in fall of 2021