

Shellfish Advisory Panel

March 5, 2025; 4:30PM

URI Bay Campus Hazard Room/

Virtual public meeting - Zoom webinar

MEETING SUMMARY

RIMFC members: K. Eagan (Chair)

DEM: A. Gerber-Williams, P. Barrett, D. Borkman, E. Schneider, S. Olszewski, J. Booth (DLE);

SAP members: B. Bica, D. Ghigliotto, J. Grant, J. McDonald, M. McGiveney, K. Murgo, C. Cokely, J. McDonald, M. Sousa, R. Tellier;

Public: M. Johnson, M. Monteforte, J. King, T. Lander, S. Katkowski, J. Boyd, M. Mitchell, R. Goodman, T. McGiveney, B. Eastman, K. Terra, W. Blair, 3 additional attendees in person and 12 attendees online.

- **Providence River: harvest schedule**

A summary of the 11 commercial harvest proposals for the Providence River were presented by *K. Eagan*. *M. McGiveney* stated that he would like an update on the two-hour opening harvest schedule from winter 2025 during the fall SAP meeting. *T. Lander* commented to his proposal number 11 that he would like Area E to be changed to a conditional area from a management area. He believes that it would produce a steady supply of quahogs at a 3 bushel per day limit. He also stated that we should look to open further up towards Sabin Point as a conditional area in the future.

A Gerber-Williams presented the formation of a motion to ensure that all necessary information is included for the regulations.

J. McDonald reiterated that they shouldn't ignore the other proposals. There are a lot of good ones. He also advocated for a one day a week opening first available. *D. Borkman* shared that there is a 40% open rate on a fixed day schedule and a 70% open rate on a first available schedule. *J. King* agreed with *J. McDonald* about the number of good proposals and stated that let's go with what god gives us. *J. Booth* (DEM DLE) stated that enforcement is not supportive of floating days, especially during the summer months, it is ok in the winter, preferably after December. He also said that they are ok with the commercial shore digging proposal as long as it aligns with the commercial boat harvest schedule. *M. Monteforte* is looking for a year-round one day per week schedule because it is easier to manage and consistent year-round. The all or nothing doesn't work in this fishery or any other fishery except for the distributor. The price doesn't drop when you

spread it out more, no boom or bust. Stick with the sustainable yield of 5 million quahogs over the years, it works. *M. Johnson* all the other Shellfish Management Areas are 3-bushel limit. Not all of the dealers can handle the 6-bushel limit. *K. Murgó* said that he wants to set aside days, they asked about it last year and it didn't happen. *J. Grant* said that he wants to change when the seasons starts, such as January 1 – January 1 instead of May 1 – May 1. *E. Schneider* said that we could meet late November to have a recommendation in December if you want to try and start Feb 1 – Feb 1. *J. King* said that 52 days a year at one day a week, let the rain take it from there. *J. Grant* proposed a compromise and amendment to the motion on the floor to combine proposal 8 and 9.

1. Motion made by *D. Ghigliotty* to recommend to the Council the following commercial Summer/Fall and December 2025 and Winter 2026 harvest schedule for the Providence River:

- **23 day cap for Summer/Fall schedule (excluding December and Winter 2026), open 8 AM – 11AM, 6-bushel limit on the following days provided water quality allows:**
- **Summer/Fall 2025: May 6, 13, 20, 27, June 3, 10, 17, 24, 26, 30, July 2, 8, 15, 17, 22, 29, 31, Aug 5, 12, 14, 19, 26, 28, Sept 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, Oct 7, 14, 21 (23 day cap on days between May 6 – Oct 21)**
- **December 2025: Dec 12, Dec 15-19: first 2 available nonconsecutive weekdays. Dec 22 – 26: first available weekday (exclude Dec 24 and 25)**
- **Winter 2026: open 8AM-10AM (2 hours) at a 6-bushel limit**
 - **First available, week of Feb 9 – 13, Feb 23-27, March 9-13, March 23 – 27, April 6 – 10, April 20 - 24**

**2nd by *M. Sousa*; Amended motion: *J. Grant*, Amended motion 2nd by *J. McDonald*;
The motion passed 9 – 0 – 0.**

2. Motion made by *M. McGiveney* to recommend to the Council the following commercial Shoredigging harvest schedule for the Providence River during 2025:

Commercial shoredigging open on the days scheduled for commercial boat harvest from sunrise to sunset at 6 bushels per person per day. Harvesters may only operate in one mode per open harvest day (i.e. vessel or shoredigging).

**2nd by *B. Bica*; Amended motion: *K. Murgó*, Amended motion 2nd by *J. McDonald*;
The motion passed 9 – 0 – 0.**

3. Recreational harvest schedule for the Providence River during 2025 remains default schedule by consensus

- **DEM OWR Shellfish Program Water Quality Update for Growing Area 3-3- (Portsmouth)**

D. Borkman presented GA3-3 proposal to reclassify from prohibited to approved for shellfishing. Water bacteria levels have improved due to upgrades in Fall River WWTF and reduced industrial activity upstream. The area now meets FDA criteria for approved. *E. Schneider* presented the opportunity to classify the area as a Shellfish Management Area to allow for more targeted assessments and a new area for relaying quahogs. SAP members stated that we need to assess the area for current quahog abundance before opening up the discussion for management options. They said that there isn't much there at the moment and that the currents are so strong that nothing really settles there. *K. Murgo* asked if we could do a dive study post-transplant at any of the transplant locations.

- **2025 Shellfish Transplant update**

M. McGiveney said that they would like to go with Greenwich Cove and Apponaug Cove and that after talking with enforcement they would localize to the north or south shore. Don't think that we need Neoplasia testing due to the close proximity of the transplant beds.

- **Any other matters**

J. Boyd stated that we are coming up on a year on the final report for the quahog commission with recommendations. The recommendations were to increase transplants and transplant funding, increase the monitoring of nutrients and targeted research to establish a quahog regulation advisory board, which should be done by DEM. More targeted research on why we aren't catching anything in the lower bay. He would like to see the Department take action to develop the advisory board.

- **Adjourn**

Adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Minutes prepared by Anna Gerber-Williams, the Division of Marine Fisheries