

Rhode Island Marine Fisheries Council  
**SHELLFISH ADVISORY PANEL**  
Wednesday, January 11, 2017, 4:30PM  
DEM Fort Wetherill Marine Laboratory  
3 Fort Wetherill Road, Jamestown, RI

**MEETING MINUTES**

RIMFC members: J. Grant (SAP Chair)

DEM DFW: C. McManus; W. Helt; E. Schneider; D. Erkan; J. McNamee;

DEM DLE: J. Poccia;

Science Advisor: D. Leavitt;

SAP members: Bill Blank; K. Eagan; M. McGivney; R. Tellier;

Public: John Crandall; Mike Foley; Manuel Sousa;

**Review of New Prospective Shellfish Management Areas (SMAs)**

J. Grant opened the meeting and provided context for the meeting. Briefly, J. Grant noted this was an informational meeting designed to provide an overview of the proposed Shellfish Management Areas that will go to public notice on 1/16/17. J. Grant offered E. Schneider the opportunity to present the new Prospective Shellfish Management Areas (SMAs).

E. Schneider began a presentation that reviewed the following areas. Aspects of the discussion for each area are summarized below.

Providence and Seekonk Rivers

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed SMA. This SMA would allow for restoration and habit enhancement (particularly for fish habitat) work to be considered and provide a management system for shellfish if water quality improves to a level that allows for shellfish harvesting to occur. In the context of restoration, D. Leavitt and M. McGivney described other restoration projects that have been proposed in this area (e.g., NBC reefball proposal). M. McGivney asked J. Poccia whether there would be enforcement issues in this area, which J. Poccia replied that it would be similar to current enforcement. D. Leavitt asked what would happen if water quality improves in this area in regards to harvest. E. Schneider and D. Erkan explained that if the shellfish management area were to be approved, possession would be prohibited here. However, if water quality improves to a state where harvest could be permitted, possession limits of quahogs, or other species, could be revisited. Differences between Marine Fisheries (MF) and Office of Water Resources (OWR) obligations and statutes managing shellfish were described. Differences between restoration and enhancement activities were described.

Warren River

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed shellfish management area: to facilitate oyster restoration/enhancement projects (e.g., NRCS EQIP and Town of Warren) that will aid in rebuilding local oyster populations and potential alternative harvest/management regimes for restored/enhanced areas that may allow for alternative harvest opportunities. K. Egan asked about what the reasoning was to have the proposed SMA go up to just short of 100 Acre Cove. E. Schneider stated that 100 Acre Cove provides habitat for the northern diamondback terrapin, amongst other species and MF currently has no intention of conducting habitat work within 100 Acre Cove. K. Egan expressed concern about the Conditional Area A section of the proposed SMA that is being fished currently. E. Schneider noted that the default quahog management for this area under the proposed SMA would be 3 bushels per day, but asked if industry would provide an alternative possession limit. J. Poccia noted that in order to enforce the SMA effectively, management strategy would have to be uniform throughout the area. There was a discussion regarding whether oyster shells impact quahog populations. Dialogue also took place on whether the SMA harvest could be specific to oysters only or quahog bushel limits could be greater than the traditional SMA default. K. Egan noted she does not support restricting any shellfishing in the Conditional Area A portion of the proposed SMA, and that the SMA should not include the Conditional Area component.

#### Town Pond

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed shellfish management area: to facilitate current and future oyster restoration work lead by Roger Williams University that will aid in rebuilding local oyster populations. Discussion was held on the possibility of increasing the number of signs throughout the state indicating shellfish closures.

#### Narrow River

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed shellfish management area: facilitate future oyster restoration work, including substrate and brood stock enhancement to aid in rebuilding local oyster populations. Discussion was held on the factors that influence oyster recruitment and larval survival.

#### Green Hill

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed shellfish management area: facilitate future oyster restoration work, including substrate and brood stock enhancement to aid in rebuilding local oyster populations. M. Foley asked about the reasons for Green Hill being closed. E. Schneider stated that they were related to water quality impairments.

#### Little Narragansett Bay and Pawcatuck River

E. Schneider provided a description and the justification for the proposed shellfish management area: facilitate potential future oyster restoration and habitat restoration work. M. McGiveney and D. Leavitt asked about the coordination we have with Connecticut on enforcement and closures currently within this proposed SMA.

### **Review of Prospective Shellfish Management Area Amendment**

#### Bristol Harbor

E. Schneider explained the proposed language that would modify the southern boundary line to where the northern-side of the dock meets the shoreline; opposed to the end of the dock. K. Eagan and M. McGiveney said it should be the end of the dock given it's much

easier to ensure fishermen are compliant using landmarks. J. McNamee and E. Schneider discussed the issue with using man-made objects as management tools, given that these objects can change over time (e.g. docks, flag poles). J. Poccia notes that legally, the GPS points are really important and useful. K. Eagan asked about the possibility of getting more signs noting closure lines, and M. McGiveney stated with was also part of the SMP mission in general for the state.

This concluded E. Schneider's presentation. Since there was no other business, J. Grant then adjourned the meeting.

Prepared by: C. McManus