

Shellfish Advisory Panel
July 26, 2017, 4:30PM
URI Bay Campus, Coastal Institute Building, Hazard Room
218 S Ferry Road, Narragansett, RI 02874

MEETING SUMMARY

RIMFC members: J. Grant (SAP Chair)

DEM: C. McManus; D. Erkan; P. Duhamel; C. Hannus (Water Resources)

SAP members: K. Eagan; M. McGiveney; R. Tellier; G. Schey; D. Ghigliotty, B. Bercaw, D. Pastore, J. Gardner (B. Blank and B. Smith absent)

CRMC: D. Beutel

Public: J. King, O. Kelley, Troiano

1. **Review of Aquaculture Applications:**

a. Application # 2017-05-006, Troiano, Upper Narragansett Bay (Conditional Area A):

D. Beutel provided a brief overview of the proposal. He offered that his site survey revealed a low density of quahaugs, and also that several public objections were received. He offered that one objection in particular offered concern about precedent if this lease were approved. A great deal of discussion amongst the panel members and audience ensued regarding concern of leases in this area (Conditional Area A) and in all areas of Narragansett Bay which have historically supported commercial and recreational shellfish harvest. **Motion made by *M. McGiveney* to recommend objection to the application; 2nd by *G. Schey*. The motion passed 7-0-1 (*J. Gardner* abstained).**

b. Application # 2017-01-007, Roebuck, Pt. Judith Pond:

D. Beutel provided a brief overview of the proposal. He offered that the site survey revealed no eelgrass present and a quahaug density of 0.88 quahaugs/sq. meter. He offered that if this lease were to be activated, aquaculture in this pond would exceed 4.8%, or approaching 5% maximum allowed in a coastal pond. **Motion made by *M. McGiveney* to recommend not to object to the application; 2nd by *B. Bercaw*. The motion passed 8 – 0.**

2. **Discussion of future aquaculture Management in Conditional Areas:** *C. McManus* offered that individuals had been expressing concern about aquaculture lease sites in the northern parts of Narragansett Bay (e.g., conditional areas A & B), and if regulations should be adopted to prohibit aquaculture in this area in light of competing uses, most notably commercial shellfish harvest. *J. Gardner* expressed concern about the use of the conditional areas for oysters and food shellfish, due to the water quality issues and higher potential for harvest of contaminated shellfish. He offered support for non-food aquaculture (e.g., rib mussels) as a means to help clean the water. *M. McGiveney*, as a

member of the RI Shellfishermen's Association (RISAA), requested SAP support to request that CRMC begin a process to identify and protect "critical shellfish grounds" and prohibit aquaculture in these areas. He offered that the CMRC's shellfish density survey as a review criteria is not a complete measure of the sites suitability for a lease site due to the variable nature of shellfish sets. He offered concern that applications are not automatically rejected even when strongly opposed, which poses undue angst among commercial shellfishermen that leases may be approved and the lease site lost to wild harvest. He offered, which was echoed by other members of the panel and members of the audience, that the lease site currently in place in Conditional Area A should not have been approved, but was "missed" by RISA during the approval process due to inexperience of the process at the time of approval. *D. Beutel* offered that mapping of areas for aquaculture suitability began in 2014, to which others in attendance offered that this process was initiated several years sooner, but that no maps have been produced. **Motion made by *M. McGiveney* to recommend to the RIMFC that CRMC begin this process; 2nd by *R. Pastore*.** *R. Pastore* offered support for the proposal due to use conflicts. Discussion ensued regarding the areas to be looked at. *D. Erkan* offered that spatial planning is needed to address this issue. *D. Pastore* offered that better planning is needed. *J. King* offered that the entirety of Narragansett Bay needs to be looked at. **The motion passed 8 – 0.**

Future Action: Council agenda item for further discussion

3. **Preliminary discussions on Shellfish Management in the Providence River Shellfish Management Area:** *C. McManus* provided a presentation on the following items:

- Revamp the current quahog assessment with more sophisticated frame work;
- Evaluate the significance of the PR SMA quahogs in supporting larvae and recruits for the rest of Narragansett Bay;
- Evaluate 2017 abundance and size distribution data in the PR SMA using the RI DEM Dredge Survey;
- Assess and utilize data and information from the quahog study fleet to update data for the stock assessment.

Upon conclusion of a robust discussion regarding management and opening of the area, no further actions are needed at this time.

4. **Discussions on Winter Harvest Schedule for Greenwich Bay Shellfish Management Areas:** No proposals were offered to amend the current default schedule. *M. McGiveney* offered that he would inquire to his constituents if any change was desired. No further action is needed at this time.

Prepared by: P. Duhamel/C. McManus