

Shellfish Committee Meeting Minutes- Recommendations to the Chilmark Select Board

September 15, 2022 5: 07PM

Non-committee members present: Stephen Larsen, John Larsen, Isaiah Scheffer, William Reich, Jeremy Scheffer and Vinny Iacono

Committee members present: Wayne Iacono, Dennis Jason Jr, Mathew Mayhew, Scott Larsen, Liz Lewenberg and Warren Doty

Commercial Bay Scallop Season 2022/23

Shellfish Constable Isaiah Scheffer reported that the 2022/23 Bay Scallop Season looks very similar to last year. The majority of scallops are the ones that the Shellfish Department grew over 2022.

1. Dennis Jason Jr motioned that the commercial bay scallop season in all waters of Chilmark start Monday, November 14, 2022. Mathew Mayhew seconded the motion (approved unanimously).
2. Dennis Jason Jr. motioned that the commercial limit be two struck bushels per day. Scott Larsen seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

Recreational Bay Scallop Season 2022/23

The committee discussed opening the family season earlier this year. Last year it was opened on October 18.

1. Dennis Jason Jr motioned for the recreational bay scallop season to open on Monday October 10, 2022 in all waters of Chilmark. Scott Larsen seconded the motion (approved unanimously).
2. Discussion by all members of the committee to forbid dragging in the area known as Muddy Cove to protect eelgrass and to limit Clam Point to dip net only. (maps will be provided when the season is posted)

Commercial and Recreational Oyster Season 2022/23 (Tisbury Great Pond)

Constable Scheffer reported that there are fishable oysters in Tisbury Great Pond but that we should be careful to not take too many, in order to preserve the spawning stock for next summer. Discussion by the committee to allow the family season to open early so people could get some for the holidays. Further discussion by the committee that last year, the commercial oyster season was better in the late winter/early spring because that's when there is a market for wild oysters. Everyone liked the way the season was set up last year. That fishermen could pick three of the five fishing days per week as long as the shellfish constable was notified before fishing. No closing date was decided but will be assessed by the shellfish constable based on how many oysters are harvested. The committee agreed that both recreational and commercial seasons should be closed some time at the beginning of May.

1. Dennis Jason Jr motioned for the recreational harvest of oysters to begin in Tisbury Great Pond on November 1, 2022. Scott Larsen seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

2. Scott Larsen motioned for the commercial oyster season in Tisbury Great Pond to start February 27, 2023, to make the limit 800 count of oysters per day, and for fishermen to choose three of the five fishing days Monday thru Friday to harvest. Matthew Mayhew seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

Propagation Program Update

Shellfish Constable Isaiah Scheffer brought in oysters, quahogs and bay scallops from this and last year's shellfish propagation to show what they look like. Mr. Scheffer explained how each shellfish was grown and the various projects and methods used during the growing season.

Natural Scallop Set

Mr. Scheffer reported that there were three decent scallop seed sets over the summer. The result of these sets was not amazing but it could result in a much better season next year. The shellfish constable reported that he had seen some seed on both side of Menemsha Creek, outside of Chocker's Creek and on his scallop collectors. He stated that he will need reports from the scallop fishermen this season before he can assess how good the set was.

Eelgrass Restoration

Mr. Scheffer reported that the eelgrass in Muddy Cove was starting to spread out towards Hariph's Creek. Eelgrass beds in the shallow areas in Menemsha Pond and outside of Chocker's Creek did look more dense and healthy compared to the last few years.

Other Discussion

John Larsen was very concerned about the number of moorings that are in Hariph's Creek. He explained that a few years ago the moorings used to more in what he referred to the bowl, yet they are now packed more tightly towards the Quitsa Landing. He also stated that not only were they packed tighter but that the moorings were more numerous. Constable Scheffer agreed with this statement and said that he has observed that the boats are also getting bigger in that area and that not only was navigation troublesome but that the moorings and chain for those larger boats were probably causing bottom scaring. The committee decided to make a sub-committee (John Larsen, Jeremy Scheffer and Dennis Jason Jr) to talk to the Harbor Master to see if we could come up with some solutions.

Meeting adjourned 6:31PM