

Shellfish Committee Meeting Minutes- Recommendations to the Chilmark Select Board

September 9, 2023 5: 03PM

Non-committee members present: John Larsen and Vinny Iacono

Committee members present: Wayne Iacono, Matthew Mayhew and Liz Lewenberg.

Commercial Bay Scallop Season 2023/24

Shellfish Constable Isaiah Scheffer reported that the 2022/23 Bay Scallop Season looks much more promising than last year. The majority of scallops are the ones that the Shellfish Department grew over 2022 and released in the spring of 2023. However a small scallop seed set in the summer of 2022 will booster the catch this year. Isaiah is seeing quite a few adults come up in the crab traps when hauling which indicates that there is a decent population. 2023 has seed the best natural seed set in the last seven years. It ranges from Burton's Camp all the way to Chocker's Creek this year and if survives it will set Chilmark up for a good season in 2024/25. They are in very shallow water and will have to be moved to deeper water once they become bigger. Isaiah also stated that there was some seed set throughout other parts of Menemsha Pond but in lower densities. There was also a great set of scallop seed in Quitsa but there doesn't seem to be any that survived.

John Larsen stated that because we have a good set maybe dragging for scallops during family season should be postponed so the eelgrass isn't loosened making scallops more likely to be blown on shore.

Commercial Bay Scallop Season 2023/24

1. Matt Mayhew motioned that the commercial bay scallop season in all waters of Chilmark start Monday, November 13, 2023 and that the commercial limit be two struck bushels. Wayne Iacono seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

Recreational Bay Scallop Season 2023/24

The committee discussed whether or not to keep the family season dip net only until the fishermen could start dragging and move the scallop seed to deeper safer waters.

1. Matt Mayhew motioned for the recreational bay scallop season to open on Monday October 2, 2023 (Dip net only) and dragging to begin on November 13, 2023 in all waters of Chilmark. Wayne Iacono seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

Commercial and Recreational Oyster Season 2023/24 (Tisbury Great Pond)

Constable Scheffer reported that there was a decent oyster seed set this summer in Tisbury Great Pond. Isaiah explained that there seems to be a decent population of oysters due to propagation efforts and that Chilmark should open TGP commercially this year. Matt Mayhew said he liked the idea of having

that fishery opened at the same time as scallop so it would alleviate pressure on both fisheries. Matt also liked the way the season was set up with the days per week and limits.

1. Wayne Iaconno motioned for the commercial harvest of oysters to begin in Tisbury Great Pond on November 13, 2023 at 800 count of oysters per day, and for fishermen to choose three of the five fishing days Monday thru Friday to harvest. Liz Lewenberg seconded the motion (approved unanimously).
2. Matt Mayhew motioned for the recreational oyster season in Tisbury Great Pond to start on November 13, 2023. Wayne Iaconno seconded the motion (approved unanimously).

Propagation Program Update

Shellfish Constable Isaiah Scheffer brought a few pictures in to explain how the growing season was. Pictures below.

Natural Scallop Set

Mr. Scheffer reported that there were three decent scallop seed sets over the summer. The result of these sets was the best he's seen since 2017. If the scallops survive the season should be much better next year. The shellfish constable reported that most of this seed set was in very shallow water and that until they get larger it wasn't possible to drag them up and move them. Isaiah will report closer to the end of October the status of the seed and make a plan to move them deeper.

Other Discussion

Constable Scheffer read a letter from Melaine Flanders describing how she would like to transfer her oyster grant to someone else. In this letter she listed Nick Wilbur as the person she wants to transfer the lease site to. There was discussion amongst the board that there needed to be a bigger aquaculture meeting where all the stakeholders are present. This is an effort to make sure that people are tending there grants and plan for the future of aquaculture in Menemsha Pond.

The Shellfish Committee decided to table any further discussion of the aquaculture grants until November 1, 2023. All agreed.

Meeting adjourned 6:11PM

Shellfish Department Update 9/6/2023

On September 6, 2023 I performed an extensive survey of Nashaquitsa and Menemsha Ponds. Below are the findings for both natural scallop seed sets and the current status of the hatchery produced seed.

Natural Scallop Seed Sites



Chocker's Menemsha Pond



East Flat Menemsha Pond

Size of the scallops from the natural set and Shellfish Department



First batch of MVSG in bottom bags 200x290bags. Second batch in bottom bags 500x210 bags.



MVSG produced seed second batch



Current size of adult scallops on the flat.

Quahog Production



MVSG average size of quahog seed currently in the quahog rafts 9/6/23.