August 24, 2017

Dear Sea Urchin License holder:

You are receiving this letter because you have been identified as a possible participant in the Blue Hill Bay Experimental Area beginning with the 2017-2018 urchin harvesting season. As you may be aware, a recent regulation change requires the use of a DMR issued tracker by any harvester fishing in the Blue Hill Bay Limited Access Area (please see enclosed chart). At a recent meeting that DMR held in Ellsworth to discuss this experiment, DMR was asked to provide clarity regarding the portion of the regulation that requires the tracker to be “turned on and continuously recording data for the entire duration of each season”. DMR committed to providing a written response, so that all participating harvesters would clearly understand this expectation.

The purpose of this experiment is to begin to understand in a more detailed way how urchin harvesters are applying fishing effort within Blue Hill Bay. While DMR will not be analyzing fishing activity outside of Blue Hill Bay, it is also important to understand the relative amount of fishing activity that a harvester spends inside/outside Blue Hill Bay. For this reason, the regulation requires that the tracker be turned and continuously recording “for the entire duration of the season”. This means, on any day that you are fishing for urchins, the tracker must be on, regardless of whether you are fishing inside or outside the Limited Access Area. On days that are open days for sea urchins that you are NOT fishing for sea urchins, but are fishing for another species, you are NOT required to have the tracker on. However, if you choose to turn off the tracker on days when you are not fishing for sea urchins, the onus is on you to ensure that the tracker is turned back on, before you fish for sea urchins again.

Finally, this data is being collected under the statutory authority of the Department to collect fisheries statistics. This section of law allows DMR to hold this data as confidential, so please be assured that it will not be released in a manner that would allow any individual harvester to be identified, but only as aggregated data.

I hope this clarifies the requirements of those fishermen who will be using a tracker this season. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions: Melissa.Smith@maine.gov or 207-624-6558.

Sincerely,

Melissa Smith
Resource Management Coordinator, DMR