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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES  
MARINE RESOURCES LABORATORY  
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PATRICK C. KELIHER  
COMMISSIONER

April 3, 2023

Dear Shellfish Committees, Town Clerks, and Town Officials:

As was mentioned in the Annual Review Cover Letter that went out January 11, 2023, DMR is conducting internal evaluations of the municipal shellfish management programs. A gap was identified, as it appears we lack Shellfish Management Plans for some municipalities, as required by DMR Chapter 7.20 (2), which outlines that municipalities must have a Shellfish Management Plan accepted by the Department prior to the Department's approval of a Municipal Shellfish Conservation Ordinance. By the end of 2023, each Municipal or Regional Shellfish Conservation Program must have a new or original Shellfish Management Plan accepted by the Department.

A Shellfish Management Plan has a very different purpose than a Shellfish Ordinance. The Management Plan is intended to set conservation goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. In the short time I've been with this program, it is clear to me that each town or regional group has very different conservation goals for their flats – there is no one-plan-fits-all model for all of Maine. Development of these plans is important to have proactive shellfish management instead of reactive management.

We recognize that it is very likely that some Municipal or Regional Shellfish Conservation Programs had a Shellfish Management Plan initially, but that plan has been lost over the decades as we have transitioned recordkeeping from paper files to electronic files. To help programs meet the requirement of having a Shellfish Management Plan by the end of 2023, we have developed a Shellfish Management Plan template, attached, which programs can use to develop their Plan. Additionally, Marine Resource Scientists (formerly Area Biologists) will reach out to each program to let them know whether we have a Shellfish Management Plan in our records already. Programs are welcome to resubmit original Shellfish Management Plans if they have access to them. However, this could also be considered a good opportunity to review a Shellfish Management Plan that was written in the 1980s, as 40-year-old conservation goals are unlikely to be the same as what are needed now.

Please feel free to reach out to me (contact below), or to the Marine Resource Scientist assigned to your town, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Meredith White'.

Meredith White  
Nearshore Marine Resources Program Supervisor  
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