

# **SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN**

for

**Bar Harbor**

**Draft – January 23, 2025**

Bar Harbor submits the following information as required by DMR Regulations Chapter 7.20, which states that the Shellfish Management Plan shall consist of:

- A. A written statement of goals and objectives the municipality plans to achieve as a result of its conservation program
- B. A description of the various conservation measures the municipality intends to employ to reach those goals.

**Committee Narrative:** As soft-shell clams have decreased on Mount Desert Island generally, and in Bar Harbor specifically, we are shifting our focus to a broad range of harvestable species, including quahogs, eastern oysters, razor clams, and surf clams. Our current resource level allows for mostly recreational harvest with a long-term goal of sustainable commercial opportunities. We are considering multiple ways to increase collaboration with other in-town committees and departments, as well as adjacent towns in the areas of research, education, conservation, and management. More specifically, we are interested in continuing our research program on clam population biology and intertidal community ecology. We are going to also begin focusing how to best implement aspects of the new Bar Harbor comprehensive plan once it is finalized, including aspects of water access and working waterfront. We are also starting a conversation about the need for more systematic water quality reporting in the town. We also will continue to work on public outreach concerning the ecology of local species, and public health surrounding harvested species and water quality. We have expanded on each of these ideas below, with members agreeing to work on specific areas and create specific action items to work on for the 2025 calendar year.

## **Statement of Management Goals and Objectives**

It is the goal of Bar Harbor’s Shellfish Management Plan to maintain sustainable populations of harvestable shellfish, including softshell clams, quahogs, and American oysters, within the intertidal. We will emphasize maximizing the opportunity for local harvesters while restricting harvest where we find evidence of overharvesting. Providing opportunities for local harvesters includes (i) maintaining access to mudflats, (ii) working to improve water quality or change potential sources of pollution to open currently closed areas, and (iii) work with partners to maintain water quality in open areas.

## **Description of Conservation Measures**

Description of specific measures we plan on taking through 2024 to achieve these goals include:

- Provide unlimited recreational and commercial licenses for residents.
- Assess populations levels of regulated species. Surveys will be done by members of the Shellfish Committee, by commercial harvesters for conservation hours, and by students from area schools. Data in 2025 is anticipated to focus on shore access sites in Frenchman Bay, with locations rotating every other year moving forward. Surveys for 2025 will focus on flats associated with our main shore access site at Hadley Point but may expand to additional sites.

- Complete our five-year clam recruitment study to determine the role of predation versus other factors (eg. overharvesting, global climate change) on local clam populations. The study will be completed by the chair and students at College of the Atlantic and will be shared with the town of Bar Harbor and other regional shellfish committees and the Shellfish Advisory Committee. Data collection was completed in mid-November 2023, with data analyzed and a report expected by April 2025.
- Assess current shore access for general conditions, boat put-ins, parking, safety, and storm resiliency. Work with town committees, land trusts, adjacent towns and regional groups on access issues for both commercial and recreational uses. Make sure our access points, their use and limitations are represented in regional databases.
- Assist the BH Harbor Committee in their assessment of working waterfront and its vulnerabilities to development and climate change.
- Create a summary of the types of water quality data that are being collected by various governmental, research, and educational groups for Frenchman Bay and adjacent waters, with links to where these data are archived. Develop some communication documents that will allow citizens to have a more comprehensive understanding of how water quality issues might impact the health of the local bay and marine resources. A first step might be a summary document with links that resides on the Marine Resources Committee webpage.
- Improve real-time communication of combined-sewage overflows (CSO's) among the BHMRC, the harbormaster's office, and the wastewater division of the Public Works department.
- Conduct ecological work of introduced species, focusing on species that have impacts on commercial fisheries (eg. Green crabs). This work should include additional species that are seen as potential threats to fisheries, aquaculture, and recreation, including invasive mudflat algae and tunicates that foul traps and aquaculture cages. Consider how to involve other organizations.
- Explore collaborative work with other towns and organizations on Mount Desert Island and in Frenchman Bay focusing on research, education, and management of marine resources. Consider how to include local students and citizen scientists in field work outlined in the other bullet points.