

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

for

Damariscotta and Newcastle

Damariscotta and Newcastle submit 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.

Statement of Management Goals and Objectives

When used in the context of this plan the terms “shellfish” and/or “shellfish resources” refer specifically to soft-shell clams (*Mya arenaria*), hard-shell clams/quahogs (*Mercenaria mercenaria*), American oysters (*Crassostrea Virginica*), and razor clams (*Ensis directus*).

Primary Goal:

The towns of Damariscotta and Newcastle recognize that shellfish resources have declined in recent years and the mechanisms for this decline are not well understood. Given this and that commercial harvesters depend on these resources to earn a living, the primary goal of Damariscotta-Newcastle’s Shellfish Management Plan is to conserve and restore existing shellfish resources to allow for continued commercial harvesting now and into the future.

Additional Goals:

- Provide opportunities for recreational harvest, when resources allow, that link the community with Damariscotta-Newcastle’s unique and special natural resources and provides economic benefits from tourism.
- Maintain harvester access to shellfish resources through collaboration with local harvesters, landowners, and municipal leaders.
- Enhance shellfish resources to provide future opportunities for commercial and recreational harvesting.

Objectives:

- Licensing: Optimize license allocations to cover the cost of enforcement of the Joint Shellfish Conservation Ordinance for the towns of Damariscotta-Newcastle Shellfish Ordinance (ordinance).
- Economic Benefits: Emphasize residential and non-residential commercial harvesting to provide income to harvesters and to support local restaurants and resale markets.
- Conservation: Use closures and harvest limits to protect existing shellfish resources that harvesters depend on.

Description of Conservation Measures

Shellfish resources in Damariscotta and Newcastle have declined over the recent years and reasons for this decline are not well understood. In 2019, the Damariscotta River Estuary Community Science Program was formed. The program is citizen science effort and is a collaboration between the Joint Shellfish Committee of the towns of Damariscotta and

Newcastle and the University of Maine Darling Marine Center. Prior to 2019, no data were being collected on our intertidal resources.

The following is a description of the conservation measures that Damariscotta-Newcastle will conduct to achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this Shellfish Management Plan.

- Review landings data and other available data to determine appropriate license allocation limits for commercial and/or recreational harvesters in accordance the ordinance.
- Collaborate with local harvesters, scientists, municipal leaders, and the community to improve water quality.
- Continue to collaborate with the Damariscotta River Estuary Community Science Program to gather data on our intertidal shellfish resources.
- Collaborate with local harvesters, aquaculturists, scientists, and regulators to better understand the mechanisms which have contributed to declining shellfish populations and investigate ways to conserve and/or enhance these resources.
- Use data and information gathered through collaborative efforts to inform shellfish resource conservation and enhancement measures and closure/opening decisions.