

## **Town of Harpswell SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Town of Harpswell 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;

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

The Town of Harpswell's goal is to maintain and provide a successful management program for the conservation of shellfish in a manner consistent with the production of a reasonable yield to licensed harvesters. Species protected under the Harpswell Shellfish Ordinance include Softshell Clams, Quahogs, Razor Clams, American Oysters and European Oysters.

Upcoming goals include;

- A) Investing in Water Quality monitoring to locate pollution sources in productive growing areas.
- B) Working with the local school district to introduce the younger generation to the working waterfront.
- C) Increase green crab monitoring, eradication and studying ways to reuse the invasive species.
- D) Develop strategies to use wild stock to repopulate growing areas that are struggling.
- E) Identify and maintain relationships with private shorefront access to the mud flats.

### **Description of Conservation Measures**

The Town of Harpswell has and will continue to manage its intertidal resources with the following tools;

**Conservation Closures:** The Town has and will continue to use the closure of specific growing areas to allow for the resources to heal or rebound from either natural or human made disruption. The Town has had this implemented this twice in Quahog Bay and the quahog resource has appeared to have rebounded in Brickyard and Rich Coves as observed when the bay reopens.

**Limitation on Harvest Methods:** The Town currently has implemented a “No Harvest of Shellfish in Intertidal Areas When Water Is Covering the Mud” regulation. This is to provide time between harvests to let the shellfish left behind bury back into the substrate, while also limiting the amount of product that can be removed from any given area for approximately 12 hours. The Town has had this in closure in place for several years and its believed that this drastically reduces the effort and take in the total landings but also preventing poaching from non-licensed harvesters.

**Limitation on Licenses:** The Towns Shellfish Wardens conduct annual shellfish surveys to study the growth or reduction in growing areas. Currently, the Town has a three year rotation on all its coves with productive growing areas. This information assists the Marine Resource Committee in recommending the annual issuance of licenses.

**Shellfish Growing and Transplants:** The Committee in recent years has maintained a Limited Purpose Aquaculture site where it has raised and grown juvenile quahogs. Once the quahogs are raised to a size less susceptible to predation, they have been transplanted in coves around town. This method hasn’t proven to produce a high return yet, but further investigation on propagation methods will be continued.

**Investing in Water Quality:** In recent years, the town has invested in investigating pollution in known growing areas. While initial stages have been completed, a further examination of the upland runoff needs to occur. The Committee has asked the Towns Budget Committee for funding to research these areas. In the end, the Town hopes to provide DMR with valuable information that may help assist in reducing closures.

**Experimental Farming:** The Town continues to brainstorm with the local school district to create ways for students to become more involved in the intertidal resources, while providing a benefit to licensed harvesters. This may eventually include a small plot where students can plant shellfish, study its growth over three years and all the while allowing for any wild spawning to occur in the cove that its located in.

**Landowner Appreciation Events:** The Committee has hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Landowner Appreciation Day event with plans to continue the event every year going forward. The event is targeted towards maintaining and creating relationships with shorefront property owners who have valuable access to the intertidal resources. During this event, harvesters provide fresh shellfish, chowders and specialty dishes all from resources that they harvested, all the while speaking with them, committee members and Town Staff about ways to allow harvester access.