

# SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

for  
City of Eastport

The City of Eastport 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**

### **Goals:**

- *To sustain the natural softshell clam population and maximize seed growth potential through judicious management controls and replenishment activities.*
- *To conserve the softshell clam resources in the City of Eastport, to primarily provide the residents a supplemental or full-time income opportunity.*
- *To support a robust recreational resource promoting tourism.*

### **Objectives:**

- *Licensing: Optimize license allocations to cover the cost associated with enforcing the ordinance and to maintain the softshell clam resource level to current and future harvesting pressure.*
- *Economics: emphasize recreational and commercial harvesting for the benefit of residents and businesses within the municipality.*
- *Conservation: Sustain a healthy population density of harvestable size softshell clams and improve softshell clam growth on flats which are traditionally low producing.*

**Committee Narrative:** This municipality historically has a small resident population of commercial harvesters, between six and ten, of which not more than three are full-time harvesters. In May of 2023, the DMR approved the request to increase softshell clam licenses for both commercial and recreational harvesting. Throughout 2023, full-time commercial harvesters did not increase, and only three additional part-time commercial harvesters purchased a license. Recreational nonresident license sales greatly increased but are not considered a significant impact to softshell clam resources. Reduced accessibility and inhospitable distances to carry clam harvest without a boat lowers the risk of overharvesting some areas. However, due to the potential for increased harvesting pressure, traditionally slow seed clam growth on the island and significant predation by green crabs and moon snails, more diligent surveillance of the softshell clam population is warranted. A detailed water quality report by the DMR revealed that the water quality adjacent to existing outflows are amongst the cleanest waters in the state. Federal regulation prohibits harvest of softshell clams within a calculated distance from outflows, regardless of water quality safe for shellfish consumption. It's unlikely additional softshell clam flats within the municipality will become open to harvesting. For the reasons stated above, the below listed measures will be put in place for the foreseeable future:

### **Description of Conservation Measures:**

- *Closely monitor softshell clam harvest pressure. Make recommendations to adjust the annual license allocation numbers and fees as needed to adequately fund enforcement of the shellfish ordinance and to minimize over harvesting of the resource. If deemed necessary to reduce harvesting pressure, additional license restrictions, harvest limits and/or closures will be implemented.*
- *Softshell clam population health will be monitored throughout the year by committee members conducting softshell clam density checks, intertidal flat condition inspections, municipal warden reports and interview of commercial harvesters. An overall softshell clam resource assessment will be an agenda item during each shellfish committee meeting. Which is typically held once per quarter.*
- *At least once per year, the committee will make a general assessment of the overall health of municipal intertidal flats for a snapshot of harvestable and seed size softshell clams. These assessments will be recorded in the meeting minutes at the end of peak shellfish harvest season in September. The assessment results will factor into the annual license allowance recommendation to the City Council and DMR for approval.*
- *A detailed softshell clam health and population density assessments shall be conducted on a rotational basis (one to two flat per year) at the primary high pressure commercial harvest areas such as Mathews Island, Toll Bridge, Carrying Place and Broad Coves. The softshell clam population assessment will be carried out by members of the shellfish committee and experienced licensed volunteers.*
- *Recommendations from committee members, harvester input, along with guidance from the Near Shore Marine Resources Program, Environmental Coordinator, will determine where to best focus seeding activities and/or other conservation efforts.*
- *The committee will place emphasis on improving clam population where ease of access and beach conditions are hospitable for tourists to recreationally harvest clams. Such as Harris and Carrying Place Coves.*
- *Softshell clam habitat enhancement, such as roughing the beach, will be a primary activity to enhance clam population density. Beginning in the spring of 2024 through 2026, we will experiment with spat collection, clam growth rates and seed clam transfer. The intent of these experiments is to determine the feasibility of improving the population density of harvestable size softshell clams, using spat and seed clams sourced from within the municipal intertidal area. Targeting transfer of slow growth seed clams from up the beach to lower intertidal areas to promote faster growth and seeding of lesser producing flats. Densely seeded beaches for sourcing spat collection and seed clams include Carrying Place Cove, Broad Cove, Halfmoon Cove, Harris Point Cove and the sand bar (boat access only).*
- *Spat collection and seeding experiments will take place from May through September. Transfer of seed clams is to be completed no later than November to reduce risk of freezing seed stock. Based on available labor resources for seeding and spat capture, seed placement will be completed by license and non-licensed volunteers. This effort will be evaluated for effectiveness through annual softshell clam survival and growth surveys during the spring and fall following the seeding efforts.*