

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN

for

Bar Harbor

Draft – July 23, 2023

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 researching and potentially adding regulations around other potentially harvestable species, including quahogs, eastern oysters, and intertidal dragging for mussels. 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 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, and are also focusing on the explicit consideration of water access and working waterfront in the new town comprehensive plan. We are also starting a conversation about the need for more systematic water quality reporting and monitoring in the town. We also will continue to work on public outreach on both 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 2023-2024 fiscal 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 non-regulated species (quahogs and American oysters) to determine if they are being overharvested. Surveys will be done by members of the Shellfish Committee, by commercial harvesters for conservation hours, and by students from area schools. Data on 2023-24 is anticipated to focus on shore access sites in Frenchman Bay, with locations rotating every other year moving forward. Surveys for

2024-25 will focus on flats associated with our two main shore access sites in Blue Hill Bay, at Town Landing Road and Clark Cove Road.

- Add or change regulations to any overharvested species in our ordinance (softshell clams, quahogs, eastern oysters), either through town-wide limits to harvest or through conservation closures, in consultation with our DMR area biologist.
- 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 is scheduled to be complete by mid-November 2023, with data analyzed and a report completed by April 2024.
- Explore collaborative work with other towns on Mount Desert Island and in Frenchman Bay including research, education, and management of marine resources.
- Work with the town to both increase communication between the public works department and the committee about combined sewer overflows (CSO) and how they can be limited, and to consider continued water-quality monitoring of cruise ships.
- Advocate for continued preservation and expansion of working waterfront and shore access within the town governance structure, due to both gentrification and shoreline erosion due to sea level rise, including both for a range of recreational and commercial use, both generally and specifically as input into the town comprehensive plan.
- Continue to improve access to information for harvesters both at access points and on the town website, emphasizing both current regulations and transitory public health closures of areas due to possible contamination of shellfish due to onshore pollution, harmful algal blooms, or large rainfall events.