

SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PLAN
for
The Town of Searsport
11/14/2023

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

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

THE SEARSPORT SHELLFISH MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Purpose: To ensure a sustainable, intertidal shellfish resource in Searsport.

This program allows for the sustainable harvest of shellfish resources in Searsport's Intertidal zones by ensuring a workable procedure for harvesters to use. Maps of the designated open areas in the current Searsport Shellfish Conservation Areas are available at the Searsport town office.

The current shellfish resource in Searsport is not strong enough to allow any commercial digging. Recreational diggers may register for a license at the Searsport Town Office during business hours.

Shellfish resources vary in density and size distribution from year to year. It is essential the Town carefully husband its shellfish resources. Following the annual review of the Searsport's shellfish resources, size distribution and abundance, the Shellfish Conservation Committee shall, in consultation with the DMR Area Biologist, determine whether limiting commercial or recreational shellfish licenses is an appropriate shellfish management option for the following year.

The **committee's goal** is to build a long-lasting shellfish conservation program that helps to protect our shellfish, clams and intertidal shellfish resources ("shellfish" meaning soft-shell clams, quahogs, surf clams, razor clams, and oysters. "Clams" mean soft-shell clams, quahogs, surf and razor clams) for recreational diggers. This is/ will be achieved by several means:

- A. Licensing based on site evaluation from year to year.
- B. Limiting the number of shellfish harvesters (determined by ongoing survey of the flats)
- C. Restricting the time and area where digging is permitted (decided in conjunction with DMR)
- D. Limiting the minimum size of clams taken

- E. Limiting the amount of clams taken daily by a harvester
- F. Building clam predator boxes, controlled clam digging surveys, predator mitigation and reseedling juveniles under netting
- G. Conduct yearly surveys and experiments/ seeding projects that are educational and based on previous intertidal studies.
- H. Provide educational information via a website (linked to the town's website), signage, committee meetings open to the public and student experiential education experiences.

Typical Experiments conducted by the committee members include

building clam nurseries (Clam Farms) which involves seeding intertidal flats with hatchery-raised clams and then covering the seeded area with plastic netting to protect the clams from one of its main predators, the European green crab. Seed clams are purchased from the Downeast Institute each spring. The funding for this project comes from our recreational license fees.

These areas are determined by the Shellfish committee which spends many hours inventorying the open intertidal flats in the town of Searsport. This is accomplished by doing detailed clam counts and measurements in separate square foot plots along different areas of the shoreline, at both high and low water marks.

Another project often done before choosing the best place to plant the juveniles is the digging in of 10-12 inch diameter plastic garden pots (top is level with the ground). Each pot is filled with sifted beach sand and topped with 20 baby clams. Some pots are covered with netting, others are left uncovered. This experiment accomplishes a couple of objectives, 1) gives a better picture of the invasives inhabiting that area and, 2) how well that particular area is suited for clam growth and survival rates. This project is done in the spring with local volunteers and school children participation.

Mid-fall, each pot is harvested for clams which are measured, counted and tabulated for review. Next year's clam seeding occurs in the areas that show the most promise.

The Searsport Shellfish Committee works to coordinate it's efforts with the town's selectboard and the Friend of Sears Island who help with conservation measures and educational in areas that overlap the intertidal areas managed by the town's shellfish management program.

For more information, please contact Steven Tanguay, chairman of the Searsport Shellfish Committee, campocean@gmail.com or 930-5920

