

*Approved April 22, 2019.*

**Wellfleet Selectboard at Shellfish Advisory Board Meeting  
Monday February 25, 2019 at 7:00 pm  
Wellfleet Senior Center**

**Selectboard Members Present:** Chair Janet Reinhart; Kathleen Bacon, Justina Carlson, Helen Miranda Wilson

**Regrets:** Jerry Houk

**Also Present:** Executive Assistant Courtney Butler, Shellfish Constable Nancy Civetta, members of the Shellfish Advisory Board: Chair Barbara Austin, Jacob Puffer, Brett Morse, John Duane, Zack Dixon, Jim O'Connell, Dave Seitler, and Tom Siggia

Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative (MSI) representatives: Scott Soares, Chris Schillaci, Steve Kirk, Melissa Sanderson

Chair Austin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

***Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative Steering Committee Presentation and Questions/Comments***  
Representatives from the MSI introduced themselves.

Sanderson, from the Cape Cod Fisherman's Alliance, said she believes that shellfish is a part of Mass Blue Economy. She noted that wild shellfishing is at core of the tradition and should not be compromised for aquaculture. She said her goal with MSI is to provide public outreach opportunities, to bring opposing sides together. She said the MSI does not have position on near shore shellfish.

Kirk, from the Nature Conservancy, said that their interest in Massachusetts is in shellfish restoration for the good of the environment. He is interested in seeing act as a forum for different ideas to come together. He also hopes to enable more funding for Departments like the DMF to get input about ~~restoration~~ various shellfish-related activities and make sure that they are done the right way.

Soares, from the Massachusetts Aquaculture Association (MAA), also serves as the MSI consulting coordinator. He said that the MAA is non-profit to promote and serve shellfish and finfish farmers in Mass., through technology and communication channels. He said the MAA is a part of MSI because it recognizes MSI as a forum to discuss a variety of issues relative to shellfish. It is concerned with tweaks to existing state policy and resource allocation, and because farmed oysters are 3rd in landed value in Mass.

Schillaci, from the MA Department of Marine Fisheries (DMF) said the DMF wants to be prepared to address any disruptive forces and emerging challenges. He said the DMF recognizes that some changes may be needed in representation on the MSI and recognizes that there are various interests in the MSI. He said the MSI will not change the way the DMF makes policy and/or regulation. He said that DMF believes that the MSI is a good forum and the DMF is on the steering committee to make sure that it is a transparent process.

Sanderson led the presentation (**Attachment 1**)

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### ***What is MSI?***

- The MSI began in 2017 with the Nature Conservancy and Fisherman's Alliance conducting a survey of 389 shellfish stakeholders.
  - They received a grant of \$100k;
- Two objectives thus far:
  1. Build capacity for shellfish;
  2. Develop a strategic state-wide plan and guidance document.
- Not a regulatory body;
- Opportunity for groups to come together.

### ***Why MSI now?***

- Increased demand for monitoring;
- Complex permitting processes;
- State and federal legislative initiatives;
- Demand for space for aquaculture business;
- Towns are using shellfish for water restoration;
- More shellfish means more opportunity for disease, needs research;
- Rapid growth of industry may mean decrease in shellfish price;
- NOAA is encouraging a national shellfish initiative. MSI may be able to get funds for Massachusetts shellfishing efforts.

### ***MSI Task Force***

- Responsible for shaping and guiding MSI process;
- Appointed and oversee MSI committees;
- Convey information;
- Task Force has more power than MAA or Nature Conservancy;
- First meeting was Jan 2, 2019:
  - created Assessment and Steering Committees, no other committees exist yet.
  - will follow Open Meeting Law in some ways but not others.
- Goals January - April
  - do research and community outreach;
  - provide data back to the Task Force.
- Goals After April
  - begin to define objectives based on input from shellfishermen and the public.

Sanderson requested that the towns submit the top 3 issues pertaining to shellfishing and the top 3 things they would like from MSI.

### ***QUESTIONS/COMMENTS***

Brett Morse shared concerns about 100's of acres opening in New Bedford. He asked what the cycle of shellfish from restoration areas would be. (Schillaci addressed this later.)

Dave Seitler said he appreciates the Open Meeting Law and he appreciates Wellfleet's representation on the task force. He asked what MSI does for shell fishermen as individuals.

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Soares responded that it gives them a voice at the table for any recommendations that will be put forward. Seittler asked if Wellfleet couldn't do that on our own.

Schillaci noted that the DMF doesn't often see organization around emerging issues. It usually happens after something has already been drafted.

Kirk said that the MSI will add to Wellfleet's voice when competing for funds.

SAB Chair Austin commented that she was happy to see the MAA proposal to allow for statewide continuity of transferability of shellfish leases on one of the slides so that it was known publicly.

Schillaci and Soares both commented that the power of the broad community through the MSI will be an advantage to get money for research and other improvement efforts.

Seittler asked how MAA decided to get involved with MSI? Soares answered that he does not know.

Morse asked, "how does Island Creek fit in?" Sanderson answered that Chris Sherman, President of Island Creek Oysters (ICO), donated time to the effort.

Seittler asked if it is a conflict of interest that Soares is representing the MAA and the MSI as well as consulting for Island Creek Oysters, and that Chris Sherman is President of ICO. Soares answered that it is not a conflict - he is acting as the recording secretary and any input comes from the people of the shellfishing community.

John Duane asked about the process of contributing to the development of a policy process. Schillaci stated that DMF will look at information from everywhere and the process will remain the same as it is now. The DMF will make decisions based on sound research and policy. Duane asked, "Have you learned anything from SI's in other States?" Sanderson answered that they have learned to meet early and often. Most of what has come from other initiatives is large, overarching ideas/projects.

Jim O'Connell. asked Kirk if his office is working with nitrogen onshore? Kirk said he is not personally, but his office is.

Chopper Young asked if the 8,400 acres in New Bedford is commercially harvested and if any biological testing has been done? Schillaci responded that 8400 is the total acreage not the proposed aquaculture area.

Wilson asked on behalf of Damian Parkington (not present), "Why was Wellfleet left off the Task Force? Why did you not use us as a model? Why was there no substantial outreach to the Wellfleet SAB?" Sanderson answered that representative areas from throughout the state were chosen. Kirk added that it was an oversight not to include Wellfleet, but that it was done without malice.

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Wilson asked who the person was that decided who would be on MSI Task Force. Sanderson answered, herself at Fisherman's Alliance and Kirk at the Nature Conservancy.

Wilson asked if it was true that the State (or the DMF) receives money from corporations, like Walmart, Schillaci answered yes, that the state seeks grant funds and gets money from a wide range of groups for a wide number of projects. Wilson asked if they got a seat at the table, Schillaci said absolutely not.

Curt Felix commented that it would be crazy if nitrogen mitigation programs (oyster reefs) were allowed to hurt the aquaculture industry by flooding the market.

Berta Bruinooge stated that she has issue with privatizing the transfer of shellfish grants because it drives out the small farmer. Shellfishing is a way that young people in Wellfleet can earn a living. Schillaci stated that the bullet point is there so that it can be discussed now, rather than later at the State House in Boston. He said that the DMF does not support that idea.

Bacon said that she would like to see the survey include more than 379 people.

Suzanne Phillips said that at the first MSI Assessment Committee meeting it was decided that it should start with input from the communities.

Diane Brent commented that she doesn't think that Massachusetts shellfishing needs a centralized solution to local problems and that the Wellfleet Shellfish Department (WSD) does a good job of addressing problems.

Aaron Francis asked where the money is coming from now and where it will come from in the future. Sanderson answered that a grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (funded by NOAA and private foundations) will fund the MSI for another year.

Schillaci added that we are no better prepared for shellfish disease than we were 15 years ago. Groups like this will help to address existing and emerging issues. This is a good way to put issues on the table and get funding for them as well as to get meaningful input from the shellfishing community. He said that there had been big cuts in the agency's funds.

Seitler asked why the state is not better at funding the DMF? Kirk answered that he hopes that is one of the things that MSI will present to the state.

Richard Blakely said that he is concerned about Wellfleet fishery's historical standing and that he is terrified that there is talk of privatizing aquaculture leases.

Bob Wallace said that there is a lot of paranoia in the room. The fear is that if every coastal town has a restoration project the market will become oversupplied. Sustainability should be paramount in what the MSI is trying to accomplish.

Jude Ahearn said that she is most concerned that there is very little transparency with this group. She brought up conflict of interest with regard to the constable and SPAT and The Fisherman's Alliance. Sanderson refuted the MSI's conflict of interest.

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Wayne Clough commended Nancy Civetta and WSD. He brought up the fuel tanks at the Marina that are close to the end of their life. He recommended finding out about funding from the state program for replacing those tanks.

Seitler asked what MSI does for the Fisherman's Alliance and the Nature Conservancy. Sanderson answered that the FA represents wild shell fisherman and they also have an investment in ARC, so they want to see a healthy aquaculture industry. Kirk said that Nature Conservancy is always looking to partner with people to achieve common environmental goals.

Nathan Davis asked how MSI planned to get money for the 208 Plans and how transparency will be achieved. Schillaci said that is partly why the DMF is on the Steering Committee and that private interests are not lost on them. Wilson added that the Town will get any wastewater funds from the State directly.

Craig P. and Schillaci. discussed the Orleans mitigation project and how many oysters from that were harvested commercially.

Brad Morse said he was concerned because of his experience with sea clam regulations in the 1980's that put a lot of people out of business.

Ginny Parker mentioned the formation of the Wellfleet Shellfishermans' Association and the appointment of someone from Wellfleet to the Task Force

Mike Devasto said we should all be wary because the oysters from mitigation projects will go into the market.

Chris Merl asked how many members were in the MAA and if it were representative of the shellfishing community as a whole. His main concern is the MAA's privatizing proposal and stated that it should be taken off the table. He also said it should have been brought to the community first to avoid confusion and fear.

Next meeting scheduled for March 11 at 6 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm

ATTACHMENT 1 - MSI Presentation