



Wellfleet Shellfish Department



300 Main Street, Wellfleet, Massachusetts 02667

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 27, 2020

TO: Town of Wellfleet Shellfish Advisory Board Members

RE: Reinstate 18" quahog blade regulation discussion and vote

Dear Shellfish Advisory Board Members:

I have heard again from boat operators again that the town always had an 18" quahog blade rule on the books, but our current regulations do not specify this anywhere. The department has looked back through the years of regulations that we were able to find:

- In the July 1, 1987 regulations Section 5.1.7, we found an 18' quahog blade regulation from when hydraulic harvesting of quahogs used to be allowed in the harbor. No hydraulic harvesting of any kind is currently allowed in the wild under present regulations, although it is allowed on licensed grant areas with restrictions per Section 7.22. We have no intention of changing this.
- In the 2000 regulations Section 9.1.4, we found a regulation stating: "Harvesting of quahogs from vessels by means of a drag provided with a blade no wider than eighteen (18) inches is permitted..."
- In the 2002 regulations, the 18" blade limitation again appears for the hydraulic harvesting of quahogs in Section 9.1.4.

Would you please discuss and take feedback from the shellfishing community about whether you would like to add the 18" quahog blade limit back into the regulations?

I also think we should take time at some point in the future to review the regulations in Section 8 Commercial Shellfishing: Dragging and Dredging. Some of our current regulations seem too vague and are difficult to enforce.

- In particular, based on feedback we have heard from commercial shellfishermen operating boats, it might be important to add a definition of gear and what it is targeted to harvest, e.g. "Gear is defined as follows: an oyster dredge with teeth per specifications in 8.3 Size of Drag or Dredge shall be used to target oysters, a bay scallop dredge without teeth and a with a sweep chain shall be used to target bay scallops and a quahog dredge with a knife blade of no longer than 18 inches shall be used to target quahogs. Any variations of dredges must have prior approval of the Wellfleet Shellfish Constable.

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- It might also be good to review Section 8.4. By-catch Limited to 20%, which has proven difficult to enforce, and we don't know the importance of why it was added to the regulations. We found it in the 2000 and 2002 regulations.

8.4. By-catch Limited to 20%

No vessel shall land more than twenty per cent (20%) of the permitted daily catch of any species of shellfish, as by-catch, other than such species which the gear used is designed to harvest.

In addition, in the past year, boat operators have also come to the department with the following issues. They shared sincere concerns for the long-term sustainability of our deep-water shellfish resources. I would like to bring them to you for your consideration and discussion at some point in the future:

- Owner/operator distinction for boats operating in harbor
- 2" ring specification of oyster and scallop dredges

This is the public process at its best....fishermen bring concerns to the department, the department conducts initial background research and then brings it to a public forum of Shellfish Advisory Board for discussion and potential decision-making. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Thank you,



Nancy Civetta
Shellfish Constable