

Wellfleet Harbormaster Department

Wellfleet Shellfish Department



300 Main Street, Wellfleet, Massachusetts 02667

To: Town of Wellfleet Selectboard members

From: Shellfish Constable Nancy Civetta
Harbormaster Will Sullivan

Date: April 22, 2021

Re: Michael DeVasto grant extension inspection results

Dear Selectboard members:

At your meeting on March 23, you approved a grant extension for Michael DeVasto to his grant #s 855 and 855B, conditioned on an inspection by our departments.

Specifically, the Harbormaster needed to ascertain that this extension would not negatively impact navigation, and the Shellfish Constable needed to ensure that there would be no conflicts with other growers or wild harvesters as a result of the extension.

On March 31, at 8:30 a.m. (low tide 8:24, -1.8), we met at Michael's grants on Field Point to conduct the inspection of his proposed extension. We began by locating correct buoy positions for his current grants using the Shellfish Department's GPS. Four of six needed to be slightly repositioned, and Michael marked these changes.

We then used the coordinates provided by Michael on his maps to mark out the proposed extension area. The two offshore points had been previously marked by Michael and these were spot on. We marked out the other three together, two of which are shared with neighboring farmer Shea Murphy.

Assistant Constable John Mankevetch inspected the bottom and found it to be mostly shifting sandbars. We surveyed the entire area and did not think it would pose any conflicts to wild fishermen nor to other grant holders.

Harbormaster Will Sullivan walked the entire boundary of the proposed extension and judged that the extension will not impede navigation in the "channel" to Blackfish Creek because it will adhere to the curvature of the HDYLLTA Trust boundary. (We use channel in quotes as this is not a USCG channel.) However, even though the grant will be properly marked at all times at its corners, it is our suggestion that additional hazard buoys be used to create a more user-friendly approach for the boating public, establishing

wellfleet-ma.gov/shellfish-department

Phone (508) 349-0325



Fax (508) 349-0305

a clear route in and out of the Blackfish Creek areas and warning them of the aquaculture gear below.


The two departments have been working on a brochure to hand out this summer to educate the boating public about the hazards of aquaculture gear below the surface. The Shellfish Department's AmeriCorps Cape Cod member, Jordan Halloran, has created a draft which we have included here. This is not finished yet but will give you an idea of our direction.

As we prepared this memo together, we felt we should bring a bigger picture idea to you for consideration. We think that we should take a step back as a community and look at the question of what to do with and how to best use the HDYLTA Trust property that the Town acquired in 2019. Approving grant extensions or accepting requests for new grants on this property one by one does not take into consideration the needs of our entire potential user public. A holistic planning for the area seems warranted in order to bring people together to consider the effects of expanded aquaculture on other harbor users. And furthermore, in an even bigger perspective, this discussion could incorporate aquaculture expansion throughout the town. A systematic and sustainable approach for how we use the Town's resources above and below the water would provide more transparent and thoughtful guidance to all and help balance common rights to – with private leasing of – intertidal land.


We are not saying that we should limit aquaculture, although it is in your purview to do so in Section 7.7 Moratorium on Aquaculture Licenses. Rather, we should make sure that we have considered how to make it available to all...the have nots (those wanting to get into shellfish farming) as well as the haves (current grant holders requesting extensions) and how any expansion of aquaculture throughout the Town will affect all other users from wild fishermen to personal watercraft operators, from beach goers and walkers to kayakers and paddleboarders. We believe that we should begin community discussions about this. Our suggestions would be to either have a community forum on it or to start with a joint meeting of the Shellfish Advisory Board and the Selectboard and then expand out from there.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts. We confirm that your approval of the Michael DeVasto grant extension falls within the Town's current regulations. The Shellfish Constable will have him fill out the actual town application which was the only form missing from his documentation and will forward that completed form to you and the Principal Clerk for the Town's records.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Nancy Civetta
Shellfish Constable



Will Sullivan
Harbormaster