



Wellfleet Shellfish Department



300 Main Street, Wellfleet, Massachusetts 02667

TO: Jennifer Flynn, Superintendent, Cape Cod National Seashore
Leon Shreves, Chair, Wellfleet Conservation Commission

CC: Sophia Fox, Research Manager, National Park Service
Geoff Sanders, Chief of Natural Resource Management and Science, Cape Cod National Seashore
Lauren McKean, Park Planner, National Park Service
Tom Guerino, Interim Town Administrator, Wellfleet
Beth Pyles, Interim Conservation Agent, Wellfleet
Jennifer Elsensohn, Conservation Secretary, Wellfleet

DATE: April 1, 2024

RE: 2024 Wellfleet Harbor cultching activities including Herring River area

Dear Superintendent Flynn and Mr. Shreves:

First, we would like to thank the Conservation Commission for renewing our permit and for the educational discussions both at meetings and on a site visit that will help us do a better job moving forward. We would also like to thank the National Park Service (NPS) staff who came on a site visit and shared NPS objectives, which will help us fine tune our cultching efforts.

As you know, we are badly constrained by our current permitted areas. Regardless, we are absolutely committed to remaining within our permitted bottom at all costs. This may mean that we are unable to use all of the shell that we currently have stockpiled, and we accept this.

As you are aware, we are planning to expand our permit and have met with our consultants Coastal Engineering (now Tighe and Bond) to lay a framework for moving forward. We have received a grant award from Wellfleet Oyster Alliance for \$25,000, towards the engineering and permitting costs, and we are confident that our permitting process will begin soon. Our first steps will be to prepare documents for Conservation Commission and National Park Service to review – as well as to present to the Shellfish Advisory Board for input.

We met the Shellfish Advisory Board last week, and they provided us with suggestions on which of our limited permitted areas we should concentrate our cultching efforts for 2024. We will also walk all of our permitted areas to see if there are opportunities in

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other locations. As referenced above, we are short on space. This will likely result in shorter strips and generally less volume of aged sea clam shell deposited in 2024. As of the writing of this memo, the water temperatures are not conducive to oyster metabolic activity, and indeed, many wild oysters are still covered with sediment accumulated over the winter. This means we are currently unable to accurately survey the existing wild oysters, and providing a detailed accounting for cultch deployment puts us at risk of covering live shellfish with dead shell, which we know the state does not want us to do, nor do we.

Therefore, in the attached maps, you will see shaded areas indicating where we will explore laying cultch in June of 2024 in each of the permitted areas. We are planning on focusing our efforts on Areas 1 (Duck Creek), 2 and 3 (Chipman's Cove), 5 (Herring River near the town propagation bed), 6C (Herring River) and 8A (Blackfish Creek).

We expect to begin cultching the first week in June and continue until we run out of space due to current limitations, or until we run out of shell (less likely). We will buoy off the areas prior to application as we are careful not to place the cultch on top of live oysters. We use a barge with a five-foot opening to distribute the shell, and we work in strips spreading the shells out.

The strips are about 100 feet long, although this year we may be forced to squeeze in two 50-foot lengths instead, depending on bottom characteristics. *This does not apply in the Herring River area, however, where we expect to be able to deposit 100-foot strips per usual.*

Usually the width of the rows on the bottom is about two feet wide, and our goal for relief height is six inches. This relief settles down over time. We sourced the cultch from Atlantic Capes Fisheries and donations from the Wellfleet OysterFest and Mass. Oyster Project's restaurant shell recycling program. All shells are very well aged.

We welcome your ideas and please let us know if you would like to schedule a site visit with Assistant Shellfish Constable for Propagation Johnny Clam Mankevetch to further discuss and place buoys to lay out our cultching plans and activities. We are committed to providing nursery substrate to enhance Wellfleet Harbor's wild oyster populations, which also creates benthic habitat for a multitude of species and improves our water quality.

Sincerely,



Nancy Civetta
Shellfish Constable



Johnny Clam Mankevetch
Assistant Constable for Propagation