

2017 WELLFLEET SHELLFISH DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted by: Nancy Civetta, Shellfish Constable

We'd like to thank outgoing Shellfish Constable Andy Koch for his 13-1/2 years of service to the town and his efforts on behalf of local shellfishermen and our shellfish resources. After extensive interviewing, the Selectmen hired me as Shellfish Constable, starting August 10. Assistant Constable John Mankevetch and Deputy Constable Chris Manulla worked tirelessly to pick up the workload and responsibilities of the entire department and made significant strides in propagation and monitoring. They invested much time and effort in training me. I thank them for going the extra mile and for sharing their thoughtful observations of mother nature and human nature – the foundation of our work. *Here are our accomplishments:*

- In 2017, Wellfleet was first in the state for both wild oyster landings and farmed quahog landings. It was third in the Commonwealth for farmed oysters and fourth for wild quahogs. These oyster and clam sales represented more than \$6.3M to local shellfishermen, highlighting the importance of the shellfish industry as an economic engine for the town.
- 142 commercial shellfishing permits were sold, totaling \$33,442.
- 863 recreational permits were sold, totaling \$44,930.
- We inspected more than 150 grants, speaking with and educating almost 100 lease holders.
- Written documentation, weekly boat patrols, communication with shellfishing community and coordination with other town departments, committees and Eastham were initiated.
- We created new shellfishing permit applications and moved to a computer-based system.
- The hard work of Wellfleet shellfishermen to monitor oyster exposure time and use plenty of ice paid off. Only two cases of vibrio were reported, a 0% occurrence! More than 4.3 million Wellfleet oysters were sold during this time period = \$2.4M in shellfishermen's pockets.
- The Selectmen voted to eliminate the old Shellfish Dept. offices on Mayo Beach, and we removed important equipment and archives. We will now need a propagation work space.
- A dredging support letter from shellfishermen was crafted with Shellfish Advisory Board and the Dredging Task Force to be sent to elected officials and decision-making bodies.
- We wrote a grant and received \$12,000 from Wellfleet SPAT for oyster and quahog seed.
- Ten loads of whole sea clam cultch were purchased and 3.8 tons of OysterFest shells were recycled and will be distributed in the harbor this spring to provide baby oyster habitat.
- William "Chopper" Young, Jr. donated tens of thousands of seed oysters, which we grew out on our bed and then distributed throughout the commercial and recreational areas this fall.
- We worked with the Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries to execute an FDA peer review of the water quality in the Inner Harbor and passed with flying colors.

And now an update from our real boss, Mother Nature:

- The harbor is enjoying an oyster renaissance: There are abundant, wild oysters throughout the harbor. Good fishing means good compliance, resulting in few incidents.
- Quahogs are not as abundant, but good fishermen are harvesting their limits.
- The blood arc clam resource, after a rocky start, provided a good living for a handful of boats. Small, but good bay scallop catches contributed to these fishermen's livelihoods.
- A downpour rain event on August 18, closed the harbor to shellfishing for four days during the height of market demand, providing a challenge to local fishermen.

- Temperatures went below 28° many times in December, closing all harvesting activities.
- Unprecedented early, quick-forming ice impeded some grant holders from removing their oysters and equipment from grants. Many shellfishermen came together to help – a testament to our strong community bonds.