



Wellfleet Shellfish Department



300 Main Street, Wellfleet, Massachusetts 02667

Date: February 7, 2024
To: Leon Shreves, Chair, Wellfleet Conservation Commission and members
Barbara Brennessel, John Cumbler, Benjamin Fairbank, Michael Fisher,
Martin Murphy, Robert Stewart
CC: Jennifer Elsensohn, Health & Conservation Dept., Wellfleet
Richard Waldo, Town Administrator, Wellfleet
From: Wellfleet Shellfish Department
Re: Commercial Shellfishermen Driving at Chipman's Cove

Dear Mr. Shreves and Conservation Commission members

Chipman's Cove is open for shellfishing the last Sunday of October to April 30 each year. The area is used by both commercial and recreational shellfish permit holders. There are two major shellfish harvested in the area which are oysters and quahogs. This area is the most fished area in the harbor in the wintertime, and the best spawning area for shellfish in the summer. The Shellfish Department stocks the area with oysters and quahogs throughout the year. As our primary spawning ground and winter fishery area, we also annually deposit cultch in Chipman's Cove to provide nursery habitat for larval oysters to set on.

The main access to Chipman's Cove is Old Pier Rd. Recreational permit holders park on the left-hand side of the road and commercial permit holders usually park on the beach below the high tide line. The commercial shellfishermen are allowed a bushel of quahogs and oysters per day in this area, and the recreational are allowed (depending on if they fished another area) 10 quarts per week. The commercial fishermen mainly park on a sandy area in front of the landing, while a few will drive south down the beach to fish the mud area. Again, this area is below the mean high tide line. The area sees the most activity in the first two months after the opening. We usually observe around seven trucks parking in front of the landing and around two to three parking south, and at most, two trucks parking north of the landing. Vehicle usage decreases over time, especially in early December when Duck Creek opens and beginning in mid-March when the Herring River opens.

The bushels of shellfish are very heavy, so the commercial shellfishermen either drag their bushels by sled, beach-wheeled cart, or carry them over the shoulder. The area has different focal points for harvesting throughout the year. In the beginning, the fishermen primarily fish the outer bars for oysters and dig clams in front of the landing. The southern area (mud area) is usually fished when the main area is slightly depleted. There are shellfish resources throughout Chipman's Cove that are able to be accessed from other landing points.

wellfleet-ma.gov/shellfish-department

Phone (508) 349-0325



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In addition, for a couple of weeks in June and September, shellfishermen use the beach landing below the high tide mark to put in and remove their spat collecting devices. Remote set gathering is a long-standing Wellfleet tradition, and Chipman's Cove is thought to be our premier location for the capture of juvenile oysters. The deployment of cement covered apparatus is a physically demanding activity that requires truck access from Old Pier Rd. As you can imagine, they are even heavier coming out laden with seed oysters. This remote set program allows growers to obtain deeply discounted seed, some of which is donated to the department for grow out and distribution in the Cove for eventual harvest. Last year, for example, we received more than 250,000 oyster seed as donations from these shellfishermen's efforts.

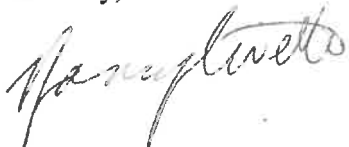
It is our understanding that we are all striving for a balance of protection and access. In that, we are united. We need to weigh the economic impact and goals of the Town versus the potential harm caused to the environment. We agree that revetments cause the most damage, yet you are required by law to allow them in certain instances. We hope that your discussion will include other site hardening activities and options such as matting for erosion control. Please see three attached Google Earth maps taken 11 years apart from 12-31-2001, 3-11-2012 and 3-18-2023.

Shellfisherman Pat Winslow was on your board in the late-2000's when the map that Mr. Nickerson distributed was decided on. We hope he will attend your Feb. 21, meeting, to recount that episode in his service on the board. He has told us that this issue was thoroughly discussed at Conservation Commission, and the map was made and signs installed. Somewhere in the past decade, the intention of that compromise was lost by both the Conservation Commission and the Shellfish Department. In fact, the signage has never been at Chipman's Cove in the tenure of Shellfish Constable Nancy Civetta's six+ years.

Driving on the beach is an accepted activity in many towns on the Cape and the National Seashore. This oversand usage is mostly recreational. It is certainly under a management plan; something that has not yet been effectively implemented in Wellfleet since the 2007 compromise was established by the Conservation Commission in the attached map.

Before we initiate any changes, we would respectfully ask that we go back to the original 2007 agreement so that we can effectively implement that compromise before we change anything else. The Shellfish Department fully accepts the responsibility of enforcement as needed.

Sincerely,



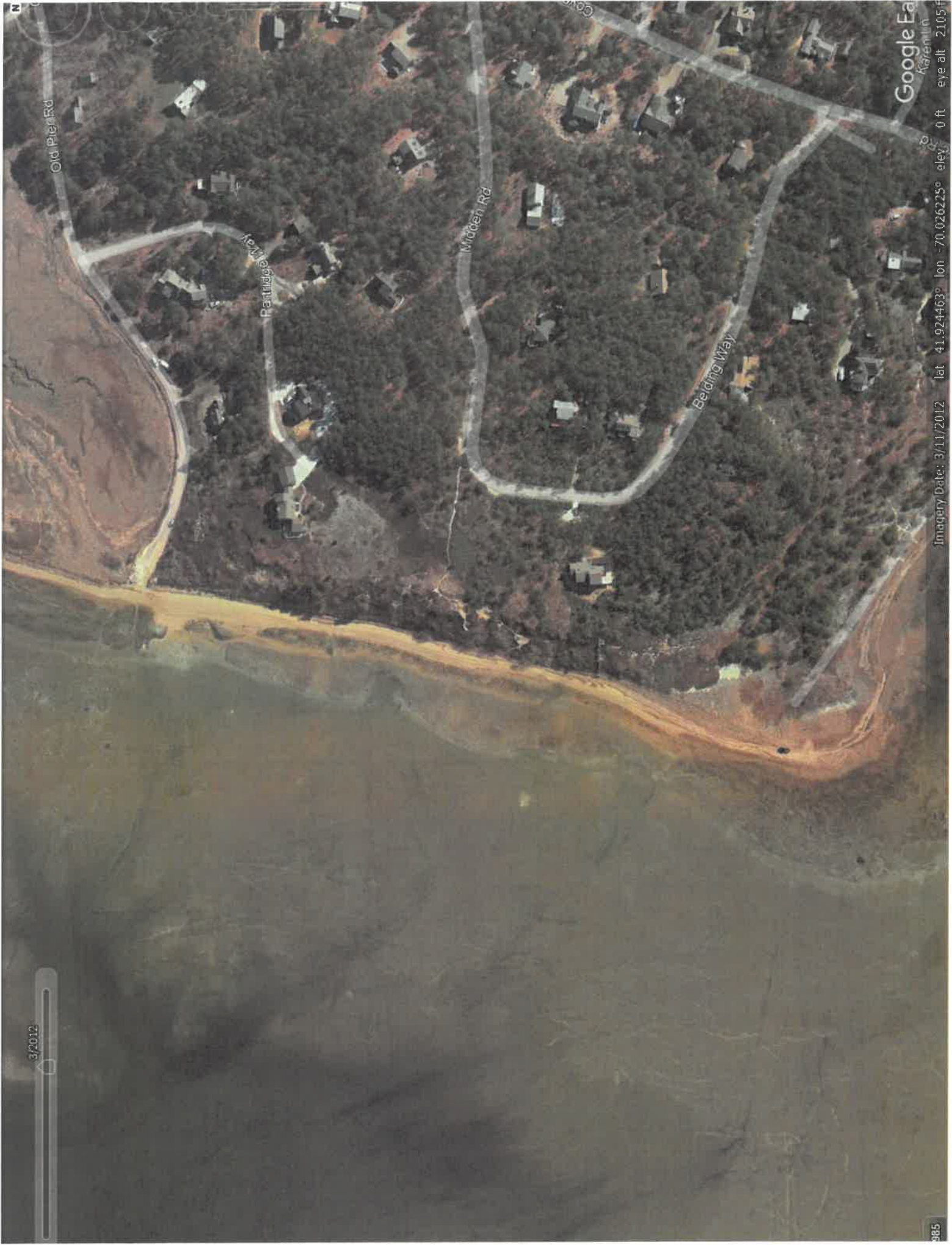
Nancy Civetta
Shellfish Constable



12/2001 2023

Image: Massachusetts, Commonwealth of Massachusetts EOE

Google Earth
Kerryville, MA
Imagery Date: 12/31/2000 Lat: 41.9262722° Lon: -70.026918° elev: 0 ft eye alt: 2105



3/20/12

Google Earth
Karennin

Imagery Date: 3/11/2012 lat 41.924463° lon -70.026225° elev 0 ft eye alt 2105 ft

385



7/2023

Old Pier Rd

Partridge Way

Middle Rd

Balding Way

Image © 2021 Airbus

Google Earth
Kjeren 10
eye alt: 2105.1

Imagery Date: 7/18/2023 lat: 41.924032° lon: -70.023646° elev: 32 ft

Old Pier Road Shellfish Access

Old Pier Road

Access and Parking On Blue Road Area
Only

Please Be Advised This Is Private Property Owner Permission Required

No Driving Beyond This Point