



Town Shellfish Crier
March 19, 2023

1. Town's Dredging of Mooring Basin Calls for an Exchange of Shellfishing Areas as Mitigation per Army Corps of Engineers: Learn Details and Share Your Ideas for Areas to Designate at Important Joint Shellfish Advisory Board and Dredging Task Force meeting on Monday, March 20, at 8 p.m. on Zoom – Shellfish Department to Host in Person at Office at the Pier

In January, the Board of Selectmen directed the Dredging Task Force to look at the Herring River as opposed to the HDYLTA area as mitigation for dredging the mooring basin. Per the Army Corps of Engineers, in order for the Chipman's Cove mooring basin to be dredged, the Town must create 28 acres of restoration area using cultch to create habitat for oysters. We will do our best here to summarize this as we understand it, however, it is the purview of the Dredging Task Force, so we encourage you to come attend this meeting to learn more.

The Town has received \$2.5M in state funding for dredging the mooring basin and needs to have a company lined up to dredge it by June 30, to receive the funds. However, the Town is waiting for its Army Corps of Engineers permit, and because the mooring basin has not been dredged in more than 50 years, the federal government considers it "improvement" dredging and not "maintenance" dredging. They see it as a destruction of habitat with impacts on species and are requiring the Town to mitigate for it. The Town could either pay the federal government \$13M or restore 28 acres of habitat with degraded water quality elsewhere in the harbor.

If the dredging of the channel around the marina is any example, we can expect that the wild harvest areas of Chipman's Cove will improve greatly after the mooring basin is dredged. In addition, the grants inside the breakwater are mired in muck, and the dredging could conceivably also cause that mud to move off these grants. These are huge positives to take into consideration. Also, creating an area with some harvest restrictions can improve habitat, boost juvenile recruitment and increase oyster populations, which could have ripple effects in the surrounding areas, as well.

We need your input to review which areas of degraded water quality in the harbor might make sense to put into the required restrictions. Right now, the Dredging Task Force is looking at the Herring River due to the fact that it is a conditional area, meaning water quality is not good enough to be open year-round, so they see the Town's efforts to restore it as bringing value to the Army Corps.

The Shellfish Department has been speaking with shellfishermen, and a few suggested either Duck Creek, which is another conditional area in town, or Blackfish Creek, which has high nitrogen levels in the water that oysters could help clean up. The Shellfish Department

will be required to cultch these areas, and they will have permanent harvest restrictions, but perhaps not a complete closure to shellfishing.

However, the Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries (MADMF) will not allow any area to be closed more than three years, so the Shellfish Department has informed the Army Corps that the restricted area would need to be opened at least for a short period of time every three years. MADMF will not allow clutching in prohibited areas, but if the Herring River restoration improves water quality, we would hope that the prohibited area might become conditional and then we could move the restricted area there – and perhaps at a later time, when the water quality in the area above the dike improves, we could add another 14-acre parcel there.

The Shellfish Department had maps made, outlining the ideas of areas discussed to date, to help us all understand what 14 acres would mean in different areas. Nothing is set in stone yet. We made the maps for discussion purposes. Please click [here](#) to review the maps with potential areas in the [Herring River and Duck Creek](#) and [here](#) to see the maps of [Blackfish Creek](#). They are just ideas for now. We need your brains to be thinking on this and your ideas to be shared at the meeting.

Contact Nancy at nancy.civetta@wellfleet-ma.gov or 508-349-0325 with ideas on how the Shellfish Department can help or improve shellfishing. Thank you!

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