

**Summary of  
Meeting of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group  
6 PM Tuesday January 15<sup>th</sup>  
Sullivan Town Hall  
Facilitated by Sherman Hoyt**

Present: Sherman Hoyt, Lee Hudson, Shep Erhart, Doug Kimmel, Steve Perrin, Slade Moore, Antonio Blasi, Mike Briggs, Frank Dorsey, and John Sowles.

**Public Comment**

Sherman noted that no members of the public were present to comment.

Sherm reviewed the agenda.

John asked that the agenda be rearranged so that the group might have time to adequately discuss an alternate proposal to the DMR plan. His proposal was intended to address the many concerns over the original designated drag harvest areas. Concerns included:

- designated area might not represent a harvestable resource,
- it really only addresses the issue of mussel dragging
- requires rulemaking that is too rigid and time consuming
- doesn't look at the big picture of Taunton Bay

He explained that the Alternate Plan would be, through rulemaking:

- Establish Taunton Bay as a Special Management Area within which
- Dragging for any species would require approval from the DMR
- A no-cost letter of permission would be given if the harvester could demonstrate and the DMR concluded that the proposed harvest avoided unreasonable harm to sensitive areas of Taunton Bay such as eelgrass and horseshoe crabs.
- The harvester would have to notify Marine Patrol at least 24 hours in advance of going into Taunton Bay
- The harvester would have to submit GPS tracks and log of harvest, bycatch, effort, to the DMR within x days of completion of harvest.

Slade offered that a good way to support John's revision to the plan and be fair and open to harvesters and other resource-use applicants, would be to clearly define areas (on maps) that require special management consideration or limit certain uses. Lee says we can say where not to harvest and leave the rest of the bay open. John suggested that the GPS tracks could be used by the DMR to limit the extent of disturbance. They would also be useful to know which areas have been recently dragged and not approve new dragging in those areas.

Frank offered that we can require the information, dictate areas, monitoring, reporting, season, etc. to ensure that operations are done in the best possible way.

Steve shared a dream – it is all connected, Flanders, Sullivan, Taunton, Skillings, Frenchman are all one. We can't or should not be wasting time focusing just on Taunton Bay because Taunton Bay really collaborates with the larger Frenchman bay. He sees a contrast between the outside musseler who sees Taunton Bay's mussels as his salvation and his own vision of Taunton Bay as spawn for areas outside. Read his recommendations. Steve said he supports the alternative plan since it takes into account the needs of the Bay. The bay is too small. He wants to put Taunton Bay in the context of Frenchman Bay by recognizing its nursery function. Slade is not sure we know whether this nursery function is a fact.

Doug suggested a meeting with harvesters to discuss our proposal and ideas.

Steve described a meeting process he participated in with the National Park Service in which a set of options were presented and discussed. For example, we could extend moratorium, or close the area as an MPA forever, or harvest by permit under conditions, and some other. He favors open dialogue.

Doug suggested a more direct approach by simply stating we are proposing a permit, letting harvesters know what is needed from them and ask for their reaction,

At this point, the scribe became distracted from his duties by a general discussion on the specifics of the plan, whether or not the plan should include non-drag harvesters and harvesters of other species. Frank suggested that we limit this to the subtidal area and not address worming and clamming. We are not ready. Slade asked about lobsters and other subtidal species. We need to pull in a lobsterman who doesn't want dragging in main channel. Shep recommended that for subtidal species we bring a kelp harvester, lobsterman, urchin diver into the loop. Steve agreed that we can't exclude lobstermen. We need to facilitate discussion with them. Shep would like to engage harvesters as species stewards since they are directly involved in harvest. They would be liaisons between DMR and harvesters. They would become part of the approval process. There could be, for example, a kelp keeper and not necessarily from local area who helps facilitate communications between industry members and DMR and this Advisory Group.

In the end, the group agreed to limit the focus of this proposal to the harvest of scallops, urchins, mussels, and kelp by any means. The issue of subtidal and intertidal goes away since only mussels grow intertidally and the approval process with consider and balance the potential impacts (to the natural system or competing fisheries like worming and clamming) of a specific intertidal harvest. Lee wants to ensure that an assessment of all fisheries is done.

Discussion moved to what sorts of information harvesters would be required to provide. John briefly reviewed his thoughts that included who, when, where, method, how much product, and how much bycatch by type. Shep asked to see an example. He thought the

enforcement issue could be handled by requiring GPS tracks alone and would bring this up with Lt. Talbot. Ultimately, whatever is done must be legal and enforceable.

Steve asked whether a permit will ever be denied. John said that if a proposal comes in that can't meet our criteria for protection and sustainability, then yes. Lee agreed that if we develop proper criteria, regardless of species, if sustainable then harvest should be ok.

Steve concerned that we are issuing permit before knowing condition of resource. Group discussed the dilemma of not having resources to learn of condition. Harvest an opportunity to learn albeit not the ideal sequence. John and Sherm pointed out that existing laws regulate size of scallops, urchins, and mussels so risk of harvest eliminating resource entirely is limited.

Steve noted that so far discussion has been harvest driven. What about non-harvest species? Are we ever going to deal with them? John hoped that once we get past this immediate issue, we can get back on track with the Taunton Bay plan that deals with non-harvest issues such as water quality, habitat, birds, etc.

Consensus emerged that the Advisors and DMR would jointly hold a meeting to discuss the proposal with harvesters on Tuesday February 5<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 pm with snow date of the 6<sup>th</sup>. At that meeting, we would present the proposed plan, conditions of permit, reporting etc. and listen to comments and suggestions. John will clear this with the Commissioner as it is a significant deviation from the original direction. John and Sherm will prepare a press release and poster. Members of the group volunteered to put signs up at various locations. Frank will bring pot of coffee, cookies, etc. Location to be announced [subsequently Franklin Town Office].

Meeting adjourned at 9pm.