

**Summary of
Meeting of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group
6 PM Tuesday, November 18, 2008
Sullivan Town Hall
Facilitated by Sherman Hoyt
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Summary Recording by Matthew Nixon
NOAA Coastal Fellow**

Advisors Present: Steve Perrin, Lee Hudson, Slade Moore, Antonio Blasi, Shep Erhart, Doug Kimmel, , Frank Dorsey, and John Sowles
Others: Rep. Rob Eaton, Matt Nixon

Shellfish Bed Closures and Water Quality:

- **Steve Perrin:** DMR has closed Carrying Place cove to shellfish harvest due to bacterial contamination. Water quality testing in a ditch front of Merchant's Auto suggested so much pollution that a septic failure had to be upstream of that test site. Didn't talk to the concerned citizen about how to pinpoint the source. Steve said it was a great place to get started in how to figure out who would do the tracing of the pollution source and who would take care of the issue.
 - **Antonio:** Asked why we were revisiting this topic. John said that it was because of public health and nutrient enrichment issues. Antonio said, why not write a letter to the town including a concerned citizen's signature from the Council saying what was going on. John said it might be an approach though did not want to finger point. He'd just write a letter to the town requesting that the town look into septic systems in the area.
 - **Steve and John:** Both commented that there was no easy way to pinpoint which tank was the problem unless there is a complete septic failure.
 - **Steve:** Asked if it was DMR's responsibility to enforce the closure and tracking down of the pollution issue. John said no, DMR's only obligation is to monitor and close (and open) sites if necessary.
 - **Antonio:** Asked Steve for clarification on which site was we were talking about. Carrying Place was the site in question.
 - **Sherm:** Asked if we could use this as a test site to follow the process of addressing problems.
 - **Lee:** Asked if it would lend credibility to the group if the group sent a letter to the town. John said that the advisory group has little authority and that at this stage, it would be better if he sent the letter, keeping concerned citizens anonymous. He'd make the letter available to the group.
 - **Lee:** Lee asked about the lack of interagency cooperation and that it is important to get the DEP involved more. She asked John where he saw a link. John said that definitive interagency lines don't exist if there is good communication. He works closely with several people from different

agencies and that the concept of established “lines” is artificial, it’s all about talking to people.

- **Slade:** Added that he could see what’s happening with this water quality issue becoming more prevalent with other issues as awareness of our initiative grows and that we risk losing credibility if we branch out into other areas that we haven’t been given control over or prioritized in the management plan. He said that there are other people whose job it is to take action and that although what we’re doing is a great thing, he just does not want to see the group’s focus jeopardized if we branch out. Shep said that we risk losing credibility if we *don’t* take action. Slade clarified that he doesn’t think we shouldn’t do *anything*, and that he understands that it fits within the water quality issue. Shep said it’s a commercial and a public health issue. Slade then said that the way we approach it is important. We’re here to advise in the comprehensive plan development.
- **Sherm:** Commented that we should keep it in the context of the mgmt plan. Slade said that the context is correct but we could overstep our mandate if we say, as a group, we should take action with the town. He thinks it is John’s issue to take care of, not the group’s.
- **Sherm:** Asked if there was another name for Carrying Place.
- **Steve:** Frank said that after the mechanics of the harvest and harvest limits, water quality was the priority with the group. Sherm said that we have a plan and we will check in with John at the next meeting for an update.

Advisor Vacancies

- None at the moment but there is a strong possibility of some in the near future.
 - **Antonio:** Asked if anyone had talked to anyone about joining the group. No one really had. Lee talked to two people but they did not have time. Antonio asked what the openings were. John said fishermen. Lee said that fishermen were advising John, just not in the context of this meeting. Antonio asked who from the towns we should have. John said he would like to do a sales pitch. John thinks that what we need to do is show value. Why it would benefit the town (WQ, employment, etc). John asked for help in approaching the towns. Antonio offered to visit Hancock, Frank and Shep will be available in Franklin, and no one on the advisory group is from Sullivan although Rep. Eaton offered to help if he could.
 - **Steve:** Mentioned Steve Eddie and that he was interested in doing work with the advisory council. He would be a good contact for involvement. Antonio asked John that in his delivery to each town council would he ask them to appoint someone from each town. Andrea Defranchesco is a name that also came up for John to contact.

Mission Statement

- **Shep:** What is the update on this? Slade and Lee worked together after Steve's input. Shep's contribution was changing "functions and services" to something a little more clear to the "layman". Lee said that Steve made four suggestions, and she thought 3 out of 4 were good. She really liked #2. She said of all of the suggestions that Steve had made could potentially change the intention of the original mission statement subtly. She advocates to keep the wording the way that we had it. Slade asked her to read the original copy. The original had "inextricably linked" in it. Lee then proceeded to read the original. Steve recommended that we spell out Taunton Bay Advisory Group. He also said to add "implementation". Shep had an objection to the third point. Slade suggested changing shoreside community integrity to "what we want and need". He said it was a little too broad and that we are not taking care of the shoreside community and that there is a big distinction. Doug said "continued ability to meet people's needs" instead of Slade's suggestion. Sherm asked if we should continue this by email and Slade said that they were almost done and that they should have a revised statement for the next meeting and Sherm will bring copies of it so everyone can have a copy in front of them. Lee agrees and thinks we should have personal discussion as not everyone chimes in on email as it gets too wordy and heady and that this is an actual document that we produce that we and other people will find useful so once we have it we can measure the choices that we've made against it. Sherm asked Lee to take responsibility to shepherd the email process and to bring the revised mission statement to the next meeting. Steve said that we're trying to say too much or it is unclear and we need to refine it.

Urchins

- John updated the group on the second urchin meeting by saying that the meeting was in response to legitimate criticism by harvesters for insufficient notification of the new management regime in Taunton Bay before July. Harvesters were pretty angry about not being given the notification to attend and therefore being shut out of the bay. Subsequently, John sent out letters to all licensed urchiners. Those that inquired were invited to a second meeting. He said offered to add 40 trays to be divided amongst the new harvesters. They said that amount was absurd. Shep asked if others were there aside from the five new applicants. John said yes and that technically there were only four new licensed harvesters that could receive allocations. John said that the new harvesters wanted 40 trays each since they weren't originally notified. One of the urchiners said that the assessments were bad and that there were more urchins out there. He said they would volunteer to go out after the season closes to compare with the original assessment minus the added trays. John came to the meeting looking to make a decision that night. He agreed to give the 40 trays each as long as everyone complies with the stewardship activities of reporting and post assessment. John said that the post season assessment will be a check on our assessment method and this process demonstrates adaptive management. He also said that for two of the four, the issue was a matter of principle.

- **John:** Also said that daily reporting has been taking place and that he's uncovered problems such as how is a tray defined? Shep said that nothing is perfect and that we understand that it's a flaw. If new urchiners do not come back to help with the assessment they will not get an allocation next year. John said it's too late to define a tray. He also mentioned that licenses are on the calendar year yet the harvest seasons are not. This creates difficulty timing endorsements and assessments. John said he would fix these problems in rule-making.
- **Sherm:** Mentioned that Quota Management is totally new in Maine and that it is extremely complicated. We are winging it as best we can. Hopefully we'll be able to document some of this process for posterity. Frank then asked about how many urchins are in a tray. John said 400 maybe, but he doesn't really know. He asked Lee to count a tray and weigh them. Lee said between 70 and 112 lbs. She also said that a lot of that was water. Trays hold two bushels and is app. 40-60 lbs. Sherm wants to know who will resolve the issue of what is a tray. John thinks he should go to something more quantitative as opposed to just saying a "tray." Sherm said we need to decide what is a Taunton Bay tray. Lee said that we should go by lbs. John pointed out that from a practical enforcement standpoint, you can't see pounds. Steve asked how John saw this experiment applied elsewhere on the coast. John said that it was too premature to consider applying what is going on in Taunton Bay to other areas. Steve said that fragmentation was an issue and that it is something to consider and that we ought to look at it even though it's a moot point right now. Steve said that we should keep in mind that what we do here can be applicable to other regions as well. Shep said that he feels that DMR is learning a lot and if we go to other bays, DMR can use this information.
- **Sherm:** Asked about scallops. John said he was hoping the DMR Advisory Council would pass the closures to avoid having to address this fishery just now. Lee said maybe we have an opportunity to think about other assessment methods. Frank said we should do a scallop assessment whether or not there is scalloping so you have something to track trends. Steve said that in the video from Mike's site, there is one identifiable scallop. Advisors want to do an assessment and that DMR should do one. Slade said we did one this year and Lee said that we should do one right before the season opens. Lee said to think about whether or not we can piggy-back our assessments (urchins/scallops) on each other. Sherm said harvesters want to be treated uniformly. Lee said it was a test for real time data.
- **Doug:** Asked if we are urging the commissioner to do another assessment right now. Slade reiterated Lee's point about doing it before the season starts. Sherm asked how many people it takes to do an assessment. John said three but we couldn't do it this year. Lee said to do it with the urchin assessment. John said he'd consider it next fall.

Outreach:

- Antonio is not sure about all the process issues that the group discussed but to make sure that the salient points are included in a year end summary. Frank is interested in a report from John's point of view on the group and the overall project. Frank said that perspective is different than what we talk about here in the group. John didn't think there would be any surprises, however. Frank said that everything hinges on the relationship between the group and John and that his point of view on the relationship is critical. Steve said that it took them a year to get to the point that we're at now. You mature as a group and that it takes a year to get to the point where we are now.
 - **Frank:** Said that any other group looking to do this is going to go through the same issues we did. A year end summary is a list of lessons learned. John will remind people of the Taunton Bay link for the website.
 - **John:** Said that we have been getting a lot of publicity lately including presentations at University of Southern Maine and Marine Dialogue Group. Sherm is speaking at a California Sea Grant Conference and Slade and John wrote a paper for it. A Brown University graduate student is interested in doing a thesis on the project. Antonio asked about whether we should reach out to newspapers such as Fishermen's Voice. John said we would be kidding ourselves by saying fishermen are happy about this project. Sherm said that fishermen are gaining input over management of their resource and that nothing like these harvester meetings have ever taken place.
 - **Lee:** Agrees with Sherm to an extent. They have the opportunity to voice their opinion but disagrees that the fishermen have decision making powers. Sherm said that both of the meetings indicate that the fishermen have input because of the meetings on assessment and stock health. Lee said that next year they will be able to help with the assessment but they do not make decisions on quotas etc. John suggested they do "influence" decision making. Slade agrees that the fishermen voice their concerns and we really consider them in what is not often done in a typical hearing process. Slade said harvesters are a key player in this process in an uncommon way. Frank said it is way more important than determining the two truckloads of urchins, it's the principal of involving the fishermen in the process. Sherm said we aren't there yet but getting there. Lee said that John is now "parking lot crew", that the guys are getting comfortable with him. Frank then brought up how John made a decision on the fly and that it was a good thing as he had used the system to adapt.
 - **Antonio:** Asked whether we'd decided on approaching the Fishermen's Voice for an article. John said he thought it might be premature and noted the importance of timing. Matt needs to get Mike's email address. John has it. Sherm said we should add a panel discussion session at the Fisherman's Forum this March. It would be a great opportunity for some of the advisors to get on the panel. Lee said she was interested. This

might be a topic for the December or January meeting. It would be a two or three hour commitment.

- Antonio said community television is a good outlet and that we would have to decide a month before and meet in Hancock to do it. We can decide at the end whether we want it broadcast or not as it is just a recording. Doug said instead of the entire meeting, we could show a half hour of discussion on agenda items. Informational meetings have been playing on Hancock TV Station 7. Plays at 3:40 PM on Friday and Saturday afternoons.

Advisors Roll in Fishery:

- **Sherm:** Brought up enforcing the harvester reporting and suggested that advisors could help. Not that they should go out on boats but that if you go out on the bridge, you can see a lot of what's going on in the bay (not mussel dragging, but others). Not talking about counting trays, just looking at activity. John said it would be useful to know the rate of non-reporting. Slade said the bridge proposal does not equal real monitoring. We need something credible to the fishermen as this might be something considered "NIMBYish". Sherm said it was just food for thought and something to think about it. John wants to know what the compliance rate is but does not want anyone to play "cop".

Water Quality Monitoring Sonde:

- John will be picking it up later on this week. Asked if it goes out next spring. John will probably not be able to put it out until after June after the smelt runs are over. Antonio asked if there was a problem if the buoy was smashed in. Because it is.

Adjourn:

Lee said we should cancel the December meeting. Everyone said yes. January 20th was proposed for the next meeting.