

**Summary of
Meeting of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group
6 PM Tuesday, October 21, 2008
Sullivan Town Hall
Facilitated by Sherman Hoyt
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Summary Recording by Matthew Nixon
NOAA Coastal Fellow**

Present: Steve Perrin, Antonio Blasi, Shep Erhart, Lee Hudson, and John Sowles

Guest Speaker: Barbara Arter

John Sowles: John would have done several things differently regarding the urchin harvest. Instead of talking to just who harvested and then asking them who else harvested, everyone should have been contacted. John received phone calls after the fact similar to “why did I not get invited”. They are now not approved to fish even though they have a history of fishing (2, 3, or 5 days a year).

- Barbara asked how many. John replied six or seven. He is not willing to change the size of the pie, so he asked all of the harvesters if they wanted to reconvene and they said yes as they are interested in limiting the number of harvesters.
- Shep asked if there was an exclusion zone. John answered yes; for draggers, not in kelp.
- Barbara asked about the total catch of 240 trays, John answered and said he'd invite the ten excluded, plus the already approved urchiners, and let them decide amongst themselves how to reallocate.
- Barbara realizes that Taunton Bay urchin fishing is not just a local fishery. There are many people that come in from up and down the coast, even if it's just a little effort here or there. They don't look at it in terms of “Bay Management”. They are using the entire coast as their resource.
- John said the silver lining is that if he does go forward with the aforementioned meeting, it would demonstrate that adaptive management could possibly work (if the meeting is successful).
- Barbara suggested that next year, the urchin paper application that goes out should have a big warning on the bottom to let everyone know what's going on in Taunton Bay.
- Steve asked what are the odds that we can promote stewardship with these non-local urchin fishermen? John said it was a great question and that he had several urchin fishermen who are very interested in the research and the work that has been done.
- Steve is worried about the sense of regional stewardship and worried about the process with other incidents that may pop up that are similar to this.

- Sherm says that if they don't show up to the endorsement meeting, they don't get endorsed (John would not feel bad about not endorsing them if they do not take the time to show up).
- Sherm says that almost every one of the fishermen is somewhat interested, yet angry about the new system of urchin fishing as they adapted to the old method.
- Barbara says that we can't assume they don't have a regional tie, and that they aren't conservation minded. Her concern is that we're taking a regional approach and has been questioning, is it really right to make the other non-local fishermen change what they're doing.
- Steve feels that there has to be pressure to get everyone to play the game, if there isn't, then this type of stewardship will not work.
- Lee disagrees with not making the TAC bigger. She will bring her objections to the endorsement meeting. She feels that all the other fishermen who "jumped through the hoops" should not be penalized because additional people need to be brought on board.
- Barbara asked what is the process for the next meeting? Are there any rules for divvying up the TAC? Lee said no, there is not, and it's very difficult when you try and get together with people you barely know and divide the TAC.
- Steve asked if you could switch zones (between 1 and 2). John said no; zones are declared each September.
- Lee wants John to adjust the TAC. Lee said John did an assessment when no urchins were out there. She said this is a very well managed fishery, there is a minimum and maximum size, and that there are many, many urchins that are very well monitored. Lee says that urchins are coming back.
- Barbara said that as recent as last year the urchin fishery has shown signs that it is not coming back.
- Sherm said the numbers are stable but are low and not climbing.
- Barbara wanted to know what 240 trays represented. John said it was 60% of the population.
- Shep wanted to know if it was a sustainable percentage and John said no, but there was a "fudge" factor.
- Barbara wants to make sure that everyone realizes that we will not have robust information for several years, that this is the first year and continued monitoring is needed.
- Shep said that maybe we should open up the fishery and let everyone fish to get feedback from the fishermen.
- John would be willing to put a limit per harvester according to whether they were initially endorsed or if they missed the April deadline.
- Sherm is encouraged that they (the initially endorsed urchiners) want to come to another meeting. John said that they all felt good to have another one to include the ones that were not included.
- Barbara said that they should be the ones having the meeting and participate in the (current) discussion. Sherm agrees.
- Steve wanted to know whether management is taking a long term view and if harvesters are taking short term view. He wants to say that because this is a trial year, the newbies are out, but on tap for next year. Steve says to stick with Plan

- A, apologize to the newbies and say that this year is an information-gathering year.
- Shep wants to know how long the harvest is. John said that in Zone II, 3 months and 3 months (October-December and January-March).
 - Barbara asked is there a legal issue with past notification. John said no.
 - Barbara wants to know whether or not to compromise or stick with the law.
 - Shep said why not throw the (initially endorsed urchiners) people that show up an extra tray.
 - Sherm thinks the fishermen will work it out.
 - Lee thinks there should be a benefit for locals.
 - Shep thinks that this whole process will move us towards more local reaction and involvement.
 - John says, locals are “who shows up and gets involved, not who lives in the local area”.
 - Barbara says that just because one is local does not mean they are better at stewardship. If they come in and take out urchins or whatever, they should be required to put in ten hours of conservation.
 - John is sticking with original guns and going to let the fishermen duke it out and depending on the reaction, perhaps throw the originals a bone.

Sherm: Three Town Ordinance

Antonio: The county board cannot issue any ordinances. The county does not have the legal authority, but the towns do if they choose to exercise it regarding the three town ordinance.

- Sherm said that a man named Ron Brown was the primary catalyst but after he dropped out, enthusiasm was lost.
- Barbara said that little is going to happen in Franklin, unless there is a good reason or demand for change. Even though the clammers that went to the meetings and rated an ordinance as a very high issue, the town does not believe it is a pressing issue. The ordinance should be a tool in the tool box, not a major, overarching thing. Pursuing a multiple town shellfish ordinance is not the answer. She thinks that education and engagement are key. Her advice is to not go forward with pushing the shellfish ordinance, but to work with the towns directly. She thinks the group should take on the process of clam management. Septic surveys and shoreline surveys are two keys that DMR uses. Barbara suggest using certain method to survey septic systems. We need to know whether or not we should go to DMR and initiate a shoreline survey. She also asked what we should do with the information. If the owner of a faulty system has money, they will replace it, if not, the town must become involved. The other thing that can be done is experimental conservation/enhancement measures in the flats.
- John wants to know, is opening the flats an ecological problem or a commercial problem? He thinks these areas might be useful for research into how they affect wildlife.
- Barbara added that when flats are closed due to fecal pollution, it is not good for humans.

- Shep wants to know if DMR can require a septic system to be fixed if it's broken. John said yes. They would be violating plumbing code. DMR is supposed to do surveys every three years but is behind in some areas as they do not have enough resources. DMR has to prioritize major commercial clam flats and some therefore, get neglected.
- Barbara advice is to put pressure on shoreline surveys.
- Lee said that unless the fines go to the town there is a cost involved in having an ordinance due to enforcement, whereas, if the town can use the ordinance as an income generator, it becomes more attractive.
- Steve said that clam flat pollution is good for the worms. There are some advantages to closure.
- Antonio wants to know if John would have to tell the town. John said yes, Shep said this would get the towns more involved.
- Matt needs to look for sanitary reports of the closed areas. He will talk to Rob Goodwin (Lamoine). One of the places is restricted but not closed. Why is the area under the bridge closed? Something to do with Sullivan's drainage. What areas should we leave closed, what areas should we move forward with. What town will we have the best luck with?

John Sowles: Work Plan

- Made copies of several things to try and get the ball rolling on the current initiatives and also to get further names to round out the group of stakeholders and complete the council. Areas needed are harvesters, municipal reps, aquaculture?
- Antonio says that we agree that this group should be making its findings public. How do we get to the bigger picture?
- Barbara said maybe we should do a press release. But we would need to find a mouthpiece for the group.
- Lee said we have done something already. John said we need to prioritize.
- Lee said that there was a wide spectrum of ways to contact different types of stakeholders. She broke down best contact channels for her outreach.
- Antonio wants to know if we need outreach. Steve thinks we do. Lee will do a brief review of the outline that we've been using and will break it down.
- Barbara asked if anyone has met with the selectmen. John has and is willing to do so again.
- Shep wants to revisit spokesperson issue.
- Barbara thinks we should create some sort of newsletter to send out to harvesters and towns, etc. We need to do a direct mailing. This would solve some issues.
- Lee brought up the issue of people not reading the newsletter if they have nothing in it about them.
- Steve thinks that brevity is key.
- Shep thinks we should have a year in review for the first outreach.
- Steve wants to know if we have more turbidity data. John said yes, CCAR, and others. The buoy can be relocated or configuration can be switched around to avoid problems.
- Lee wants to look at the mission statement again and put in "Stewardship". John suggested she talk to Slade and go ahead.

- RE: Urchin Issue: Shep wants to add that instead of taking the 40 trays out of the current TAC put in additional 40 more and divide that 40 among the new ones.

Adjourn

- Next meeting, November 18th. John is the weather contact.