

Last Revised 1/26/2010

**Summary of
Meeting of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group
6 PM Tuesday, January 26th, 2010
Sullivan Town Hall
Facilitated by Sherman Hoyt
University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Summary Recording by Matthew Nixon
NOAA Coastal Fellow**

Advisors Present: Steve Perrin, Shep Erhart, Frank Dorsey, Slade Moore, Lee Hudson

Others: Linda Mercer, Matthew Nixon

Introductions

- Sherman Hoyt opened the meeting and laid out how the proceedings should occur.
- Clarification was needed as to what document was the actual final draft of the Taunton Bay Comprehensive Management Plan. It appeared that the Draft Plan originally provided to the legislature has not been updated to reflect the progress of the group in a single document.

Workplan Action Review to Identify Accomplishments and Needed Actions

- Linda Mercer clarified that the purpose of this review is to identify priorities to undertake for the duration of the project, not to reflect on how well or whether or not things have been accomplished for the final report.
- Frank suggested that it might not be worth going through the list twice. He suggested using a “what we did” and a “what needs to be done” division for each goal set forth in the Plan.
- The group tended to agree that this was the correct route to follow.

Action Items: What Has Happened and What Needs to Happen

- **Action Item One:** *Formation of the Advisory Council to reflect an abundance of users.*

What has happened: The group was formed, though with limited representation and experienced member loss due to attrition.

What has to happen: Addition of municipal and harvest advisors

- **Action Item Two:** *The Advisory council will report to the Commissioner twice each year.*

What has happened: John has reported to the Commissioner in the past. Linda asked if the group felt that their voice had been heard.

What has to happen: Increased documentation with internal communication and with communication between the Department and the advisors. If this were corrected, some issues would be alleviated. Lee Hudson used the transferability of quotas as an example. Additionally, the process of decision making is a significant issue that must be discussed and/or prioritized and documented in the plan.

➤ **Action Item Three:** Conditions to support healthy populations.

What has happened: Characterizing natural communities, resource uses, and natural processes are critical elements for this action item. Several studies have documented, through short-term efforts (horseshoe crabs in Hog Bay, excluded), conditions in Taunton Bay – Frank has listed most of these in a matrix. The other essential piece to this is developing resource management guidelines based on the information gathered. Some of this has been achieved through the management of the four fisheries so they avoided unnecessary alteration of natural communities (e.g. eelgrass meadows) or other ecological attributes (e.g. horseshoe crabs).

What needs to happen: Longer term, and expanded monitoring would better identify what constitutes baseline conditions for natural communities, etc. Keeping management requirements in step with ecological conditions and resource-use shifts is the other essential piece that must continue. One example is designated drag zones. Another is adjusting Total Allowable Catch frequently enough to avoid resource depletion and the ecological implications with which it is associated.

➤ **Action Item Four:** Physical disturbances will be managed to protect eelgrass.

What has happened: Drag zones were mapped and established.

What needs to happen: See above – the dragging zones identified may need to be updated as eelgrass coverage shifts. Analysis of existing photographic materials is needed to determine as best as possible the historic “baseline” of eelgrass acreage and density that we ought to be emulating through our management. Wendy Norden (UMaine Machias) has a student that may be interested in conducting a time series study on eelgrass versus mussel growth historical photo analysis.

➤ **Action Item Five:** Physical disturbances will be managed to protect other rare and sensitive habitats.

What has happened: The spatially focused management strategy developed through the group lead to dragging outside of areas of known (eelgrass meadows) or suspected (horseshoe crab home ranges) vulnerability. The extent to which actions were taken to consistently promote the conservation of hard bottom areas below Burying Island is unclear due to a lack of documentation of all management decisions.

What needs to happen: Keeping management requirements in step with ecological conditions and resource-use shifts is necessary.

- **Action Item Six:** *Maintain the light penetration depth through the water column to protect historically mapped eelgrass beds.*

What has happened: Water quality monitoring program was initiated in the summer of 2009. Additional water quality monitoring has occurred for the past 20 years by local stakeholders.

What needs to happen: Existing data needs to be compiled from all sources and it needs to be determined if light penetration is a limiting factor for the Bay's eelgrass. If so, the sources of reduced penetration must be identified and if possible, corrected

- **Action Item Seven:** *Maintain stable or declining levels of toxic contaminants/prevent an increase in closures.*

What has happened: Mussel Watch no longer has a sampling site in the Bay. No new shellfish closures have occurred in the area. Carrying Place has been opened for shellfishing.

What needs to happen: Continued monitoring and dovetail this monitoring effort with the multi-town shellfish ordinance.

- **Action Item Eight:** *Sedimentation from human activities does not negatively affect other ecological or human uses.*

What has happened: Water quality monitoring.

What needs to happen: We need to determine if sedimentation is a significant factor in the first place. Do we have signs of this?

- **Action Item Nine:** *Attain State of Maine Swimming Standards.*

What has happened: Nothing.

What needs to happen: DMR needs to figure out the process for certification.

- **Action Item Ten:** *Horseshoe Crab population to remain stable or increase.*

What has happened: No dragging zones for conflicting resource uses were established to protect the two horseshoe crab populations.

What needs to happen: Continued population monitoring in Hog Bay and re-initiated monitoring in Hog Bay. For our purposes, the intensity of monitoring may not need to be as high as what Sue Schaller does for her monitoring efforts on Hog Bay.

- **Action Item Eleven:** *Restore Mussel, Scallops, and Urchins Populations.*

What has happened: There have been assessments and reporting on all three previously mentioned in addition to Kelp as a fourth. By the late 1990s, urchins and scallop densities were low enough for some harvesters to

concentrate their efforts elsewhere. Assessments suggest that scallops above the bridge are still depleted.

What needs to happen: DMR is not sure that Urchins or Scallops have been restored as of yet. Allowing time for the scallop stock to rebuild in the absence of harvesting is probably warranted. Each successive change in harvest management strategy, and data supporting those changes, for the four species should be added to the Initial Comprehensive Management Plan as addendums. Kelp share needs to be discussed. There is also a need to tweak the existing, old mussel bed documentation.

➤ **Action Item Twelve:** *Support Sustainable Commercial and Recreational Harvests.*

What has happened: See item 11.

What has to happen: see item 11.

➤ **Action Item Thirteen:** *Measurable impacts from aquaculture operations are confined to the lease site or vicinity of discharge.*

What has happened: MePDES permit determines what discharges are allowable for the land-based facility. The oyster culture operator performs surveys with a third-party to identify recruitment of oysters outside of the lease area.

What needs to be done: CCAR needs to be consulted to see if anything has been done and Mike Briggs needs to be consulted to see if any oysters have escaped.

Additional Recreational Impacts That May Come to the Bay

- Opening of the Sunrise Trail, Opening of Gordon's Wharf to public access.

Develop Specific Plan and Timeline To Achieve Remaining Priority Actions

- High Priority areas are:
 - **PROCESS ISSUES:** *communication, documentation, decision making, protocol, follow-up, lost in the shuffle.*
 - **RECRUITMENT/RETENSION OF MEMBERS:** *harvesters, one thing to do is interview people who have dropped out and find out why they have dropped out, the advisory group can look at the holes in the board and try to fill in some of the holes that currently exist and;*
 - **CREATION OF A TRANSITION PLAN WELL BEFORE THE PROJECT SUNSETS:** *one possibility is to make the management area larger, perhaps down to Bean Island. This will be a committee of the whole group.*

- At the next meeting, the group will discuss Process Issues, then Recruitment at the following meeting, and so on.

Local Forums

- The friends of Taunton Bay would be a good local forum “forum”.
- As a group, harvesters are not interested in listening to other people talk. The Advisory Group could possibly work with the Friends of Taunton Bay to make more of these forums happen.
- Frank will bring this up to the Friends of Taunton Bay Executive Board.

Other Issues

- Matt will look into the timeline for Gordon’s Wharf and get back to everyone on it and report on possible forms of funding for signage and education.
- Steve would like to know what the status of the shorebirds and forage base might be in the future.

Other Issues and Adjournment

- As the time is 8:15 PM, the group feeling is that additional issues will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Next Meeting date will be **Wednesday, February 17th, 2010.**