

Deer Isle Stonington Shellfish Committee Meeting Minutes 03/12/2025

Committee Members in Attendance:

Crystal Gove – Chair, Ex-Commercial Harvester
Bill Gove Sr. - Commercial Harvester
Kayne Irvine – Commercial Harvester
David Goding – Recreational Harvester
Phelps Brown – Vice Chair & Mariner's Park Representative
Ben Hardie – Commercial Harvester
Allison Melvin – Aquaculturist – Fish Creek Oysters & Greenhead Lobster
Dick Eaton – Commercial Harvester
Kurt Ciomei – Commercial Harvester
Raelene Pert – Shellfish Warden

Guest speakers:

Grace Robie & Hannah Horecka – Water Quality
Brian Beal & Tessa Houston – Downeast Institute
Hannah Annis – Nearshore Marine Resource Scientist

Selectmen:

Evelyn Duncan - Stonington
John Robbins - Stonington

Guests: 20

6:05 PM - Meeting Start Time

Minutes from last meeting: Unavailable due to the secretary, Emaly Piecuch being sick.
Moved to table until next meeting

Report from Chair:

1. 3 seats that were empty in Stonington are now filled. Allison Melvin of Fish Creek Oysters – Aquaculturist & Greenhead Lobster, Dick Eaton a long time Commercial Digger and Kayne Irvine a new and upcoming Commercial Digger. There is now a FULL Shellfish Conservation Committee for Deer Isle Stonington.
2. 2025 Conservation Events handouts for everyone. Will go over details at the next meeting. All information needed is on THAT SHEET including how to check current hours and meetings already accrued.
3. Because of a dramatic drop in license sales over the last 10 years the income from license sales are barely touching half of what we need to pay our Shellfish Warden. Fundraising alone may only contribute \$2000 to \$2500 per town. That still leaves a deficit of \$10,000 - \$15,000 per town. Only solution is to raise Commercial Resident and Non—Resident License prices. Other idea from Town Managers and Clerks - raise Non-Commercial licenses from 10% to 20%. Going from 4 to 8 Non-Resident Licenses. The majority of people do not want more out of town

classifications. Greenlaw Cove has not improved with water quality located on page 3 of the handout.

Kayne wanted to know how they check the water, how much water is taken and what it is they look for in their samples along with if the samples are taken when the tide is receding or coming. Grace said they sample 100 mL, at a depth of 18 inches of water below the surface, at all tidal stages except for when low tide is showing mud flats. Sample get brought back to the lab where they look for fecal coliforms or E.coli only.

2. Brian Beal with Tessa Houston of the Downeast Institute -

Crystal first presented a preface of why they came noting the "Letter of Rescindment" sent in September 2024 that somehow was never received by the Downeast Institute. They are here to present their case to have the Committee take a revote to possibly have them continue their research started back in 2022.

Brian who has worked at the University of Maine, Machias for the last 40 years, gave a presentation to the Committee and guests showing what he and the Downeast Institute have been doing throughout many coastal towns up and down the Maine coast since 2020. He stated that since 1977 clam landings throughout Maine have been on the decline by 80%. They have studied clam population and green crab predation using recruitment boxes placed strategically on mudflats. They have also found when and in what circumstances male and female clams release their eggs and sperm, what times of the years it is released and for what length of time the release takes place. They have been able to recreate this in a lab setting at the Beals Island Regional Shellfish Hatchery (which turned into The Downeast Institute in 2000). Not all towns have the same outcome. They also found that in every town that has high populations of green crabs, that town has lower population of softshell clams and vice versa with Downeastern Maine having higher populations of clams compared to Southern Maine. This presents green crabs flourishing in warmer sea waters where clams use to but are now being eaten by these green crab "take overs". Brian mentioned that the larger the clam the more sperm and eggs are produced which leaves him wanting to suggest to the DRM a statewide 3 1/2 in. soft shell clam limit on harvesters. Bill mentioned that if that was all there was in a cove, the clams would die off because of lack of food resources for the larger clams and an oversupply of larger clams for bloodworms to feed on in any area like that. All their information can be found on their website, downeastinstitute.org along with their cumulative research.

After the presentation, the Committee voted 8 in favor, 1 against & 1 abstained to have DEI continue their research in Deer Isle and Stonington.

Last Call:

Kayne wanted to know where the DMR was on it's new law that would allowed diggers to sell clams from coolers out of the back of their vehicles. Crystal said that SHAC just informed everyone that morning in its meeting it was currently awaiting to be passed by Legislature that was currently on break. The cost would be \$100 for the Retail Seafood License and then another \$50 for that specific license to sell from the back of a Marine Patrol inspected cooler and vehicle.