

Blue Hill Bay Watershed Meeting- Fisheries
Ellsworth High School Cafeteria
4/23/2012

Minutes

Attending: Jim Fisher, Barbara Arter, Hanna Annis, DMR, Greg Burr, IFW, John Kelly, ANP, Phil Black, Town of Blue Hill, Clare Enterline. DMR, Lou Flagg, DMR, Stephen Rappaport - Ellsworth American, John Hopkins, Brooklin Planning Board, Carl Young, Town of Tremont, Ciona Ulbrich, BHHT.

Opening Remarks – Barbara Arter

- Sponsors
- Partners
- Maps
- Data- via MERI

History

- Resource Inventory by FOBHB
- Research by MERI
- Blue Hill Bay Symposium

Economics

- Information contained in the Handout
- Data on fishermen by town
 - 400+ harvest licenses
 - Commercial Landings – Hancock County – stable over time- tied with other major counties
- Website – for meeting notes and other information

Goals

- Hear from people about bay concerns and needs

Hannah Annis, DMR presentation on Municipal Shellfish Management Program

- Give municipalities the ability to manage their local fisheries
- Clams – second most valuable fishery in Maine
- Towns who want to manage their own clam fishery, must have some type municipal ordinance.
- Out of the 8 towns , 7 have a shellfish ordinance, Tremont does not.
- Regional management

- Towns can opt for joint management of resources
- Frenchman Bay Regional Shellfish Conservation Ordinance
 - 7 towns in FB have "interlocal Agreement"
 - with 75 commercial licenses and 340 recreational
 - **Could BHB towns do the same thing? Would Ells administer as well? Or maybe BH??**
 - During a regional red tide closure, a lot of clambers crowded upper Frenchman Bay
 - Local fishermen asked for more control
 - Agreement covers all of the popular clams and oysters
 - Participants
 - Gouldsboro to Bar Harbor
 - Administration – City of Ellsworth
 - Towns commit \$3,000 in addition to license fees
 - Clammers pay approx. \$400 for license
 - Committee works with warden
 - Largest part of budget is for warden (for all 7 towns)
 - Local Management Actions
 - Setting number and types of licenses, etc.
 - Common Goals
 - Living wage
 - Recreational opportunities
 - Incentives to replace failed OBD
 - Maintain the resources
 - Harvesters have more say in management
 - **Greatest Benefit is one warden for all 7 towns - cost effective and efficient**
 - Challenges
 - Build support
 - Maintain committee
 - Developing a plan
 - Funding
 - Ordinance
 - Enforcement
 - Maintaining access to flats
 - Working with land owners
 - Mission Statement
- Questions
 - Can people dig anywhere in the 7 town region?
 - Yes, if you have a permit it's good for the entire region
 - Puts less pressure on the resource

- Allows seeding
- Unlimited residential Licenses
- Limited non-resident licenses (right now 10% are non-resident licenses)
- Unlimited residential non-commercial licenses
- License renewal requires 10 hours of conservation work
- How does the shellfish warden manage access – sign in for permits in specific areas
- Recommendation if the Blue Hill Bay towns wanted to organize
 - Need to hold some stakeholder meetings
 - Education about the program
- Is there any interest in creating a Blue Hill Peninsula regional program
 - Phil Black – there is a local re-seeding program
 - Sedgwick and Brooksville don't have any program

Greg Burr – IF&W – **Inland fisheries**

- Two people cover Castine to Calais to Vanceboro to Eddington – size of the state of Connecticut
 - Manage inland fish populations
 - In charge of stocking ponds
 - Inventory fish population and health
 - Determine rules regulating fishing
 - Seek to assure access to fisheries
 - There are 500 lakes and ponds and thousands of miles of streams and rivers
- Blue Hill Coastal Streams
 - European immigrants introduced practice of damming streams for mills
 - Also created dams for flood control, and other purposes
 - We no longer need a lot of these structures
- Passage issues:
 - **Fire Pond Dam in Blue Hill** – may be needed for fire control (debatable) prevents fish passage
 - A fishway would help to support
 - Smelt, eels, sea run BKT, tomcod, etc.
 - **Failed Culvert in Surry** at Contention Cove– blocks fish passage
 - Culvert is too small
 - Elevation is too high (perched)
 - Need to build then lower and with a natural bottom
 - needs invert liner with weirs
 - **Culvert in SW Harbor - East Marshall Brk**
 - wetland is made by road - road backs up water

- have a grant (BKT Joint Venture) to replace it with an open bottom passage and 1.2 times bank-full width to take 100 year flood.
 - will be wide enough for terrestrial animals can walk through
 - **Marshal Brook West Bank**
 - Granite box culvert
 - Too narrow, results in scouring at the outlet
- General problem – Towns are not required by DEP to have a proper culverts – 1.2 times the bank full width. Only DOT is required to have 1.2x width.
 - Less costly solutions are often agreeable
 - Also if culvert is large (1.2 x) then beavers are less likely to build there and block the culvert/stream/passage. Beavers prefer to build in constricted areas.
- **SW Harbor – Buttermilk Brook**
 - Flows into Bass Harbor marsh
 - culvert is under road and blocks passage to cold spring upstream
 - Water is a heat sink above the dam – not suitable for brook trout
- **NE Harbor Asticou Brook**
 - Ornamental Pond – fertilizer problems
- **McFarland Brk in Trenton – Route 230**
 - Airport mitigation project
 - Replaced undersized culverts with large 3-sided open bottom culvert (bridge)
 - Culvert is wide enough that it has a bank so that terrestrial animals can walk there and pass without going up on the road.
 - Successful project
 - Question – do the migratory fish come back?
 - Need to conduct more research to see whether fish return
- Open bottom culvert replacements
 - Installing these as quickly as money allows
- Benefit to restoring migratory fish
 - sense of place
 - small business opportunity for local residents
 - return to our natural environment
 - all important for local economy
- Question
 - What is the impact of fertilizers?
 - Land uses in general make a big difference
 - Cutting trees heats up the stream water
 - **Most of the coastal streams in this region have been assessed**
 - Information on the assessments is available
 - Is there any legislation to require better culverts?
 - Concerns about cost have prevented aggressive changeover

- Surry is working on a replacement for Patton Pond Stream Crossing on Route 172..

Clair Enterline DMR Anadromous Forage Fisheries in Blue Hill Bay

- Research on impacts of fertilization on Alewife eggs
 - Not conclusive, but evidence suggests that this contributes to the problem
- Smelt
 - Typically eat plankton and small shrimp
 - Live up to six years
 - Spawn in estuaries at head of tide
 - They often spawn just below culvers
 - Fall – move back to the bays.
 - They move between streams within larger regions
 - There are distinct population segments. Penobscot is quite distinct from others; DE is similar genetically to Massachusetts which suggests stocking influences
 - Landing numbers declined dramatically
 - Historical range – included Chesapeake Bay, now is limited to New England
 - Population decline is gradually moving south to north along eastern sea board
 - Causes – rising temperatures, land use changes, pollution, etc.
 - Restoration of habitat needs to be followed by stocking in areas that are badly depleted
 - Want to keep stocking organized to genetic types
 - MDI alewives and smelt do not have a good spawning population- they have been gone for so long. Once restored those rivers would require stocking at least at first in order to become established. Stocking would require genetic testing in order to determine which strain to stock there.
- Blue Hill Bay
 - Smelt spawning grounds
 - Most are still functioning, but with much smaller populations
- Licensing
 - Hook and line or dip net with 2 quart limit. The only commercial license is in Pleasant River (Columbia Falls)

River herring

- Blue Backs – fast flowing mainstream rivers, Alewives – slow moving water, lakes and ponds
- Range from Carolinas to Maine
- Fisheries are town managed. Many towns have harvest rights but choose not to harvest for conservation.
- Population collapsed in the 1970s
- River Herring has rebounded some with three day per week closures

- Many states have a moratorium on all fishing. Maine shifted from 2-day to 3-day closure for conservation.
- Amendment 2 - ASMFC multi state management because fish move from state to state
 - Prevent further declines in river herring
 - Improve understanding of by-catch
 - Increase understanding of stocking
 - Closing many fisheries - If fishery is not sustainable it will be closed
 - Fishery must be proven to be sustainable
 - Need to collect data – catch and effort
 - Biological data
 - Fisheries now require a sustainability plan
 - Currently Ellsworth and Mount Desert have sustainability plans and have some commercial harvests
 - Illegal in Maine to take, possess, harvest or sell
 - Exceptions – towns maintain harvest rights, 5% by-catch, other limitations
 - Some towns are more restrictive
 - Pending endangered species act – concerned (not endangered or threatened)
 - Future determination – December
- Ways of knowing there is a problem - metrics that are measured to determine sustainability:
 - scale samples
 - Age and length
 - Sex ration
 - Return rate
 - Counts

Comments

- Carl
 - Commercial fishing seems to account for the collapse of the fish population
 - Scallop draggers – turned up too much mud
 - Kelp harvesting – eliminating oxygen from the bays
 - Passamaquoddy Bay – has more mackerel now that are eating the Pollock
- Netherlands had a decline in fisheries and it had to take actions
- What about large predators? Cormorants, osprey, even the return of eagles.
- Invasive species such small-mouth and large-mouth bass?

Other fisheries issues

Carl –

- Aquaculture – may need to secure areas for aquaculture
 - Some of this can be moved on shore – pumping water

- Conflicting uses - what is good for one species may not be good for another for example scallop dragging causes WQ issues for aquaculture
- Dragger technology impacts on water quality
- Shellfish farming
 - Species – are sensitive to depths, temperatures, currents, sediment
 - Zoning would restrict the kinds of aquaculture that can be practiced by location
 - Zones: oysters prefer warm, shallow; mussels like it deeper but still tidal with light; and salmon like it very deep.
- Need to create a cohesive, integrated management plan – need good communications. Requires lots of time and talking.
- Look at model from Scotland – mapping and planning for bays
 - Marine spatial planning initiative – following impressive effort in Massachusetts
- Wind farms? Not likely to be feasible in Blue Hill Bay
- Past efforts at Bay management planning have been very difficult political battles
- Discussion of wild mussels – wild beds in Blue Hill bay have all but disappeared
 - There is very little recruitment of mussels – no significant harvesting for 3 – 4 years from Vinalhaven to west MDI. There is recruitment DE (Schoodic east)
 - There are mussels, but not the big banks
 - Eider ducks eat a lot
- American eel population has collapsed – may be placed on the endangered species list
 - Would need eel passages at dams - need ramp with "indoor carpeting"
 - Would help local economy
 - They migrate from the Sargasso Sea and are not fixed to specific rivers
- Lobsters - lobsters were not brought up. A large part of local economy. Are there any issues? Or is it ok? In general stocks have been up for several years.- some scientists fear a serious crash that would impact the local economy very seriously.