



Waterford-East Lyme Shellfish Commission



Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 21, 2019
East Lyme Town Hall, 7:30 pm

Members present: Chair Peter Harris, J. Patrick Kelly, Paul Spakowski, Eric Kanter, Tom Bowlen, Larry Tytla, and Elizabeth Gelinias
Members absent: Marcia Benvenuti
Guests: Chief Warden Rich Chmiel

- 1) The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm and a quorum established.
- Approval of Minutes from previous meetings:
 - a. The Secretary's minutes of the October 17, 2019 sub-committee meeting were reviewed and approved on a motion by Mr. Spakowski, seconded by Mr. Kelly, vote : 7-0).
 - b. The Secretary's minutes of the October 17, 2019 Regular meeting were reviewed and approved on a motion by Mr. Spakowski, seconded by Mr. Kelly, vote : 7-0).
 - c. The Secretary's minutes of the November 6, 2019 Special meeting were reviewed and approved on a motion by Mr. Spakowski, seconded by Ms. Gelinias, vote : 7-0).
- 3) The Treasurer's report for October 2019 was approved on a motion by Mr. Spakowski, seconded by Mr. Tytla, vote : 7-0
- 4) The Warden's report was delivered by Chief Warden Chmiel. The Niantic River is currently open to shellfishing and Area B is now open for the season.
- 5) Old Business-
 - a) Permit from DA/BA for the relay of oysters from the Noank Oyster Cooperative to the Niantic River has been approved. Relay of oyster seed will occur in the next week. A student from the Marine Science Magnet High School in New London will study oyster viability for a short duration project related to this seeding with an advisor from UCONN.
- 6) New Business-
A discussion as to whether to have a scallop season ensued. Chair Harris recognized Mike Stepsky of Quaker Hill to speak, Mr. Stepsky stated he had seen enough scallops to warrant a scallop season and encouraged the commission to approve a season. A motion to approve a scallop season from Dec 15 2019 to Jan 15, 2020 was approved on a motion by Mr. Kanter, seconded by Mr. Spakowski, vote 6-1 (Mr Harris against).
- 7) Ex-Officio comments-
Updated the commission on the status of the East Lyme Public Safety building.
- 8) Correspondence -
Correspondence related to the Shellfish restoration project were highlighted by Chair Harris.
 - a) Update on Shellfish Commission Gathering to be held Jan 11. 2020 at the CT Agriculture Experiment Station.
 - b) Annual Report was reviewed for submission to the Waterford Bd of Finance. (attached to these minutes)
 - c) A motion was made by Mr. Harris, seconded by Mr. Kelly to add an agenda item to review the 2020 funding requests for Towns of Waterford and East Lyme, motion

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Nov 22 2019 AT 9:30 AM/PM
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

passed, vote 7-0. Discussion ensued and a motion was made by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Spakowski to request \$5000 from the Town of Waterford and \$3500 from the Town of East Lyme (this is the same amount awarded in 2019, monetary difference related to differences in financial requirements from each town). Motion passed 7-0.

9) Public Input—

Mr. Stepsky, Quaker Hill CT was recognized to speak during agenda item 6.

10) The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm on a motion by Mr. Spakowski, seconded by Ms. Gelinias.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Harris

10/11/2020 10:00 AM
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Waterford-East Lyme Shellfish Commission
Annual Report –2019

The Waterford-East Lyme Shellfish Commission (WELSCO) oversees recreational shellfishing in the Niantic River. There are 2 areas in the Niantic River available for recreational shellfishing; Area A which is open year round and is located in the central part of the river south of Sandy Point to about just north of the entrance to Smith Cove in Niantic, and Area B which is open seasonally from approximately Dec 1 through May 31 and is located generally in the southern third of the river. The open and closed status of each of these areas is overseen by the Bureau of Aquaculture and the Ledge Light Health District.

Recreational permits are sold by both the East Lyme and Waterford Town Halls as well as Hillyer's Bait and Tackle and Mackey's Bait and Tackle. Permits are sold under a variety of conditions based on duration, residency, and senior citizen status. The pricing and variety of permit categories has remained unchanged from last year. WELSCO is not authorized to issue commercial shellfishing permits based on state statute.

Although clam stock in the Niantic River appears to be sustainable, purchasing additional clam stock was considered but was not successful due to a statewide shortage of clam seed. This shortage will make future WELSCO management decisions very critical.

WELSCO owns the Shellfish Warden boat which is used to collect water samples, as required by the Bureau of Aquaculture, to allow for recreational shellfishing activities. WELSCO wardens collect water samples not only for WELSCO but also for Waterford Shellfish and East Lyme Harbor Management/Shellfish commissions. The Warden boat is one of the few municipal boats in the water year round and has been used in the past by other departments in emergencies. The State regulations dictate that after one inch of rainfall the recreational shell fishing areas are closed until water samples are tested to confirm bacterial levels are at acceptable levels.

As of Oct 31, 2019 there were a total of 552 permits sold generating \$12,358 of revenue for WELSCO. The revenue from permit sales helps to offset operating costs of WELSCO. WELSCO purchased a new outboard motor for the Warden boat this year for a cost of approximately \$10,000. The previous motor served the commission well but the age of the motor and increasing service costs necessitated a new motor be purchased. Other annual costs for WELSCO include funding half the cost of the Niantic River pump-out boat and the annual

financial audit required by the Town of Waterford. Funding the pump-out boat is critical to maintaining the Niantic River status as a no-discharge zone.

Due to efforts in the last year, we have recently entered into an agreement with a group of citizens to form a public-private partnership to enhance the native oyster population in the Niantic River. Approximately 100,000 oysters will be seeded in November to improve water quality, through the oysters water filtering feeding process, and will provide oysters for recreational harvest in 1-2 years. As part of this initiative, we have also engaged a student from the Marine Science Magnet School in New London and she will study the oyster viability in the first month of seeding. She will be advised by a UCONN professor.

Future Goals

WELSCO will continue to carefully manage our clam stock through a combination of restocking efforts, management of native stock, and helping to mitigate man-made influences that negatively impact shellfish sustainability. WELSCO will also attempt to enhance scallop populations to a level where future recreational scallop seasons may be possible. Improving water quality is an important component of this and WELSCO also believes enhancing oyster populations in the Niantic River will improve water quality which could potentially help the return of more sensitive species like the Bay scallop.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Peter Harris,
Chairman of the Waterford-East Lyme Shellfish Commission.