

Harpswell Marine Resources Coordinator
Activity Summary July 24 – September 6, 2014

The following headings detail the work that has been completed by the Marine Resources Coordinator or is ongoing to date – normally the reporting period would span one month, but I wanted to include an update on the clam seeding project that was completed on September 6, 2014, because it was such an important event in the marine resources activity for Harpswell.

Ongoing projects

Municipal Predator Control Pilot Project (Strawberry Creek Pilot Project)

Strawberry Creek has been fished for crabs by Marine Resource Committee members, and has shown a fairly low impact population there. Crabs seem to prefer to migrate up through the channel, and some are showing up beyond the study area, on the other side of Mountain Rd in the shallow areas there. Numbers and sizes have been low (approx. 10 – 15 pounds per month, with an average carapace width of less than 45mm), and seem to be comparable to what has been observed at other intertidal study areas in Casco Bay this season. So far, crab number suggest that maintenance trapping could be effective at removing the low numbers that show up in the mudflats.

Mud has been regularly turned at one of our study plots several times per week, and will continue to be turned throughout the rest of the study period. Any differences in the “regularly turned” mud will be noted and compared to the mud that has been left undisturbed. This data should provide some basis to help us consider management options for mudflats next season.

A large amount of clam seed was placed in Strawberry Creek during the September 6 seeding project (which is discussed in more detail later in this report), so that we can take advantage of the “protected” status that this area provides for the seed due to the ban on all harvest activity, including worm digging. Some of the seed was protected with netting, while a larger area was left without netting, to help us determine if some areas can support viable clam seed growth without the expense and extra maintenance of adding netting to the area.

Follow-up on Shoreline Survey and Water Quality Work with DMR

Alison Sirois from DMR was originally planning on attending the August 26 meeting of the Marine Resources Committee, however she then informed us that she would be on vacation that week, and would plan on attending the September 23 meeting instead.

Alison has promised to provide an update on the DMR perspective of Harpswell growing area classifications, and she has also provided us with preliminary water quality data that indicates poor scores at some of our areas that are currently open to harvest, which may impact their classifications in the coming year. We hope to convince DMR to propose seasonal closures in those areas (e.g. closed during the summer months), rather than a complete prohibition on harvest.

Denis-Marc Nault, the lead Area Biologist, attended our August 23 meeting and discussed proposed changes to the Municipal Shellfish Program regulations, which included clarifying the requirements for shellfish resource surveys by towns, as well as potentially adding the options for towns to relay shellfish out of restricted areas and put them down into approved areas, creating a closure in that approved area until the restricted area shellfish were “purged” and clean enough for commercial harvest. This provides a particularly interesting opportunity for Harpswell, since we have many seasonally closed areas that could function as “restricted areas”, and we could discuss designating certain areas in the town as the “approved sites” where this product can sit until it is purged clean. There is no provision in the current draft of the regulation that provides for the inclusion of seasonally closed areas, but under the federal NSSP program this is allowed, so I attended the public comment hearing for this bill and requested that seasonally closed areas be added to the language in the DMR version. A final review of the public comments will happen at the end of September.

Neoplasia studies in soft-shell clams

There has not been any update on this project during this time period, but we plan to continue to hold open the option for testing as soon as details can be arranged with the testing scientist.

Soft-shell clam seeding project

Harpswell had an opportunity this year to purchase excess clam seed from the Town of Brunswick, which had made a large order last winter, but now finds that they do not need to plant all of the clam seed they ordered, due to excellent natural sets in some of their flats. The Selectmen approved the purchase of ~250,000 seed, and we moved ahead with a joint project to plant some clam seed in the shared boundary area with Brunswick, while reserving some seed for Harpswell-specific coves and areas.

I donated my time to drive with Dan Devereaux (Brunswick Marine Resource Officer) to the DEI hatchery on Beals Island on September 5 to pick up the clam seed, and RAI



Mesh bags filled with 8-10 mm baby clams from the DEI hatchery. Each bag contained over 6,000 clams.

Photo by D. Couture

staff and several Harpswell commercial harvesters, as well as Marine Warden George Bradbury, all showed up at the meeting location at Princes Point Landing on the following morning to organize, distribute, and deploy the clam seed.



Harpswell and Brunswick harvesters worked together, sharing resources and labor, to plant 500,000 baby clams in our two towns.

Photo by D. Devereaux

Clams seed was deployed along several of the boundary areas between Harpswell and Brunswick, and the remaining seed was planted at sites that had been surveyed this year for pH sediment quality, and which were determined to be favorable for survival. The Harpswell-specific sites included both coves at the Oak Ledges, Long Cove, a protected area in the Reach, and Strawberry Creek. Clams that were seeded in most areas were protected by nets, including a small plot at Strawberry Creek, and the remaining clams were broadcast throughout Strawberry Creek because it is a protected area under the Pilot Project, and will remain undisturbed by other clam harvesters or worm diggers while these clams grow out.

This story, and the historic nature of the “cooperation between harvesters from two towns” made for some nice press, and our project landed on the front page of the Times Record. A photo from Strawberry Creek in Harpswell was on the cover as well – and I admit I may have been a little bit sneaky by sending the reporter off in the truck with my staff to the Harpswell site, before Dan Devereaux could take her on his airboat with him to the Brunswick sites...

Recruit and Organize Green Crab Trapping Volunteers

Green crab traps were finally picked up from Freeport at the beginning of August. By this time, the bulk of the trapping season has already been organized and played out, so we are holding these traps in reserve in case we see a spike in green crab numbers right before the coves begin to freeze over. If we do not see a need for these traps, then they will be returned to Freeport before the end of December. We hope to arrange for a similar MOU next season, but will begin planning this winter, so that we can obtain the gear and get it into people’s hands at the beginning of the trapping season in 2015.

Mapping pH in sediments

Following the guidance from the Marine Resources Committee for priority areas, RAI staff completed pH mapping in High Head Cove, Mill Cove, Long Cove, and both coves by the Oak Ledges. This completes the initial pH survey work that was requested by the Marine Resources Committee, and we will be discussing options for how to use this data going forward, as well as if the MRC wishes to continue to survey new areas, or to check these surveyed areas again in the spring, or some combination of those two options.

We have posted a note on our Marine Resources web page (discussed in more detail later in this report) inquiring about interest by any local citizens in attending a training

session to learn how to use the Town pH meter for Harpswell. In the meantime, the Town pH meter has been cleaned, calibrated, and is now ready to be used by students at Harpswell Coastal Academy in work they are doing as part of their studies. I will continue to maintain control over the location and upkeep on the Town pH meter.

Identify Partnership Opportunities

Harpswell Coastal Academy is extremely interested in establishing a “study cove” in Harpswell, where they will be able to perform multiple field experiments as well as ongoing projects. We need to discuss possible options with the MRC, to find an area that would not be of high commercial value and which has access that is available to the school. This could be a very positive, high-profile partnership opportunity.

Media contacts

I did a brief interview with Jennifer Van Allen from the Portland Press Herald, which appeared in a story published on August 14, about the rule change that eased up on the regulations regarding green crab trapping.

I spoke with Peter McGuire about the joint clam re-seeding project between Harpswell and Brunswick, and he ran a story in the Forecaster about the project on August 27, 2014.

I spoke with Rosanna Gargiulo from the Times Record after our last MRC meeting, and gave her more details about the clam seeding project. Rosanna wrote a brief article that ran on August 28, and I invited her to join us in the field for the actual clam seeding project.

Rosanna Gargiulo came to the landing site on the clam seeding project day, and after talking with several of the other participants at the landing site, I sent her off with my staff to the Strawberry Creek site so that she could watch them seed the area, and a picture from Strawberry Creek with the accompanying story made the front page of the Times record on September 8, 2014.

I have included electronic copies of all of the articles in your packets.

Other Activity

Harpswell Marine Resources Web Page

I met with Terri Sawyer to see if she would be willing and able to create a designated page on the Town website where we could post all of our marine resource information and activities, and she did a wonderful job. I have provided Terri with a batch of data and information on our ongoing projects, and will continue to provide her with updates, so that anyone who is interested can find out about what we are doing and review our data sets as we generate them. I believe this is a great step forward to create a better way to make sure we are transparent in all of our activity, and to make sure that everyone has access to marine resource information.

Shellfish Resource Surveys

At a meeting with Cumberland County law enforcement officials at the end of July, we were able to share new protocols from DMR about shellfish resource surveys, which allows for 100 ft. transects instead of 50 ft. transects if desired, and we also arranged for the MRC to provide the Marine Wardens with a list of priority coves for survey work, to help the Wardens better focus their activities. George and Kyle have been knocking out shellfish resource surveys fairly quickly this season, and we have a manageable list for coves remaining to be surveyed before the end of the year. I have also offered RAI staff, as available, to assist the Wardens with survey work if they get to some large areas and need a hand, and if harvesters are not available to assist. We have also been provided with a new spreadsheet to use for entering the data from the resource surveys, and I will be posting all of these to the Marine Resources web page soon.

Rule changes put green crabs on Maine's front burner

 pressherald.com/2014/08/14/green-crab-on-maines-front-burner/

By Jennifer Van Allen Staff Writer

There's a great big target on the backs of predator green crabs now, thanks to rule changes by the Maine Department of Marine Resources that went into effect this week.

As of Aug. 10, commercial fishermen no longer need a special license to harvest and sell green crabs and don't have to report their green crab harvests to the state. Lobstermen will now be allowed to take them as bycatch. And when the Sheepscot, Damariscotta and Medomak rivers are closed for fishing other species of crabs between Dec. 1 and April 30, fishermen will still be able to harvest green crabs from those waters.

Additional Images



Green crabs sit in a bucket after being hauled in on the Harraseeket River in Freeport. The invasive species preys on bivalves such as softshell clams, which are Maine's third most lucrative fishery. Photos by Gabe Souza/2014 Press Herald file

Public and private efforts are underway to rid Maine's coastal waters of the invasive species, which preys on the state's valuable shellfish population and wreaks havoc on eel grass. Although the crustaceans, which can be anywhere from 2½ to 5 inches long, have been reported in Maine for more than a century, scientists speculate that warming ocean temperatures have allowed the crabs to multiply.

The crabs feast on bivalves such as softshell clams, which are Maine's third most lucrative fishery. In 2013, 10.6 million pounds of softshell clams were valued at \$16.9 million. But that was down from 11.1 million landed in 2012, according to the DMR, a decline partly attributable to damage from green crabs.

In December, hundreds of researchers gathered at the University of Maine in Orono to discuss the issue at

a Green Crab Summit. In February, Gov. Paul LePage ordered the creation of a task force to study their impact and potential solutions. As a result, Brunswick, Freeport, West Bath and Harpswell are studying the most effective ways to trap green crabs.

As awareness about the problem has grown, so has the effort to harvest crabs. In 2013, there were 52 licenses to fish green crabs, and 10,596 pounds were harvested, according to preliminary data from the DMR. The year before, 36 licenses were issued and 3,762 pounds landed.

Meanwhile, entrepreneurs are exploring opportunities to turn the predators into profits by marketing green crabs for everything from fish food to gourmet meals.

“The rule changes certainly makes things easier,” said Dan Devereaux, a Marine Resources officer in Brunswick.

Since 2012, he’s seen a decline in softshell clams that he directly attributes to the increase in green crabs. As a result, he reduced the town’s number of commercial shellfish licenses from 57 to 50, and anticipates more reductions going forward. He told state officials during public hearings about the rule changes that Brunswick has scrambled to purchase traps to harvest green crabs, describing their predation as “a serious threat to the shellfish resource, marine ecosystem and economic environment not only for Brunswick but for all other coastal communities.”

In the last year, researchers have been working at monitoring the green crab population with an eye toward managing it.

Marine biologist Darcie Couture, who is studying the green crabs in Brunswick and Harpswell, said that her team saw the population of green crabs peak in July. The catch is now starting to taper off closer to shore, but in deep waters off of Harpswell, the harvests are still large.

“We’re still pulling out hundreds of pounds each week,” said Couture, a signal to her that there’s a sustainable population in deep water. Last year they didn’t see green crab catch numbers fall until winter.

The hope is that the pattern that’s emerging this year will repeat itself next year so researchers can identify a distinct “green crab season.” That would allow fishermen and towns to prepare for it by putting traps in strategic places to protect their shellfish resources in the spring, and keep traps there until the end of the season.

“Once we identify a pattern, towns can make this an ingrained part of their management strategy,” she said. “We don’t have a complete understanding of what the season is yet. We’re just starting to build that data set.”

Brian Beal, a marine ecology researcher at the University of Maine at Machias, has been doing a series of studies in Freeport, tracking crabs and assessing how they’re affecting clams in the area. In Freeport, the green crab catch is below levels they saw last year, and that the weight of average catch per trap is less than 1 pound.

Couture said the attention has spawned a stream of calls from entrepreneurs who are looking at potential new markets for the pesky creatures. Some are looking for new ways to process the crabs to capture their meat and others are looking at new uses for their shells and other components.

“We haven’t seen any leaps in progress, but that’s a path that remains open,” said Couture. “We’ll continue to work with anyone who is interested in trying to find a commercial use.”

Margaret Harrington, manager of Harrington Bait in Woolwich, hopes that one of those commercial uses

will be bait. Her store sells bloodworms and sandworms, and she sees a steady demand from fishermen who want green crab as bait. If there's a viable market, she said she would consider building a processing operation.

"We're always interested in expanding what we're able to sell," she said.

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Harpswell, Brunswick clammers plan historic seeding project



[Peter L. McGuire](#)

Wednesday, August 27, 2014 at 11:30 am

HARPSWELL — Clammers in Harpswell and Brunswick are planning a massive seeding effort to boost the stock of soft-shell clams in rich harvesting areas.

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The Harpswell Marine Resources Committee agreed to the plan at its Aug. 26 meeting, committing volunteers and funding to help spread 250,000 seed clams in Long Reach, the narrows near Princess Point and in the New Meadows River.

The reseeded effort is believed to be the largest attempted jointly by two towns in the state, according to Brunswick Marine Resource Officer Dan Devereaux. It offers an opportunity to rebuild a resource that provides the livelihood for dozens of families in both towns.

It is a unique example of cooperation between communities with a history of tension and sometimes outright hostility over harvesting territory and town boundaries, Devereaux noted.

"The hope is to start working together collaboratively as we recognize that the actions of bordering towns are more and more critical in the restoration of productive mudflats," Devereaux said in an email. "Some will like it, some won't, but overall more collaboration between bordering towns helps improve the vitality and sustainability of the industry for all."

Ordinarily, Brunswick annually reseeds sparse clam flats by moving stock from other areas in town. But in part because of predation by European green crabs, surveys last autumn showed an absence of young clams, or spat, in typically productive areas.

That prompted the town to order 1 million seed clams from a Downeast hatchery, as an emergency measure, Devereaux said.

Surveys this spring and summer, however, showed healthier populations of young clams than earlier, leaving Brunswick with a huge order of seed, more than it could use, especially if the number of green crabs found in clam flats remains low, he said.

By sharing the first order of 500,000 young clams with Harpswell, seed will be distributed throughout boundary waters, hopefully spawning new clams in both areas in the future, Devereaux said.

The towns plan to each commit half of their share, 250,000 total, to the border areas. The remainder will go to other mudflats within each town's territory.

Pulling together the operation promises to be a complicated endeavor, involving multiple teams of two to three volunteers moving into different zones to plant seed, in some cases requiring the use of an air boat.

"It has to be very time coordinated because it's time critical," Devereaux told committee members at the meeting, adding that the clams needed to be planted almost immediately to keep them from dying.

Harpswell's marine resources committee agreed that partnering with Brunswick could help restore some of the ground they have lost over the past few years.

It may cost as much as \$4,000 for Harpswell's share of the seed. The committee will also have to get enough volunteers to put out the young clams, one 5,000-count bag at a time, and provide protective netting for newly seeded areas.

Committee Chairman David Wilson said he'd prefer to see the area of the narrows, between Buttermilk and Doughty coves and Long Reach, remain mostly closed to harvesting, allowing the fast-moving water to spread clam spawn into nearby harvesting areas.

"We're going to use the narrows like a fan," he said in an interview following the meeting.

Committee member Wendell Cressey agreed that with the intense pressures being put on the clamming industry from environmental factors like pollution, green crabs, and warming waters, it is time to start working for solutions to common problems.

"If we don't start doing something soon," Cressey said, "clammers aren't going to exist."

The joint seeding effort is planned for the afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 6.

Clam project finds Brunswick, Harpswell ‘working together’

August 28, 2014

BY ROSANNA GARGIULO Times Record Staff

HARPSWELL

Intertidal flats spanning Brunswick and Harpswell are slated for a volunteer effort to seed half a million baby soft-shell clams the first weekend in September.

“It’s kind of a big deal,” said Darcie Couture, Harpswell’s Marine Resource coordinator, in a Wednesday phone interview with The Times Record. “Harpswell hasn’t done a seeding project in years.”

The project is set for Sept. 6, and will launch from Prince Point, off Princes Point Road, in Brunswick, between Long Reach and Harpswell Cove.

At their Aug. 26 meeting, the Harpswell Marine Resources Committee agreed to partner with Brunswick on the project and will purchase half of Brunswick’s spat — or juvenile clam — order from the Downeast Institute hatchery.

“It’s a great thing for the towns to be working on together,” said Brunswick Marine Resource Officer Dan Devereaux. “I’ve been doing this for 17 years in Brunswick and before that I worked for the town of Harpswell — this is the first time they’ve come together.

“Some harvesters don’t like the idea of sharing the seed and some do,” said Devereaux. “To replenish the flats, it takes the cooperation of both towns because the spawn is floating out in the water column, it doesn’t adhere to town lines.”

Devereaux said he expects to see approximately 15 volunteers from each town. During the first week of September, Brunswick will test the pH levels in the areas where the seed will be set to check that the environment is habitable for the spat.

“Brunswick places the order early on — you have to order about a year in advance,” said Couture. “They noticed over the spring and summer that they were getting some good natural (spat) sets and extended access to Harpswell.”

Several areas in Harpswell and Brunswick have seen a reduction in the green crab population, which predate soft-shell clams and are believed to have nearly eliminated natural clam sets in some flats.

Harpswell will purchase 250,000 spat from Brunswick for roughly \$4,000, said Couture, which will come from the Marine Resources Committee’s budget. Buying the seed, however, is only half the battle, she said.

“To get half a million baby clams spread out — remember we’re working on the tidal cycle,” said Couture. “Brunswick has an airboat, and some of the Harpswell clambers do too, so we’ll shuttle teams out with bags of seed and hopefully it will run like clockwork.”

The hatchery spat will be bagged in counts of 5,000, said Couture, to assist in seeding at a recommended density of 5,000 clams per 100-square-foot area.

“If the mud is soft, you just broadcast the seed,” said Couture, “like you would seeds in a field.”

Couture said Harpswell and Brunswick plan to lay netting over some seed beds, but some beds will be unprotected to determine if a late season set in a year with reduced green crab numbers is less vulnerable to predation.

“Netting may be something we have to review on a year-by-year basis,” said Couture. “Last year, we couldn’t have even tried it — there were just too many green crabs — but this year maybe with a fall seeding we can forgo netting.”

Green crabs move offshore during the winter, said Couture, and by the following spring the clams may be deep enough in the mud that they are less accessible to green crabs than other prey options.

“They’re still hauling quite a large number out of the deeper water in Quahog Bay,” said Couture, noting that 600-700 pounds of green crabs are caught in 100 traps per week in the bay. “It may be that in the intertidal areas you can do maintenance trapping to keep your clams safe.”

Milky ribbon worms have also been spotted in large numbers in some areas in Harpswell, though surrounding areas seem unaffected, said Couture. It’s a high-priority problem, she said, but one that does not yet have a good solution.

“In Brickyard Cove, lots of dead clams and lots of worms,” said Couture. “They don’t have legs, but they have no trouble moving through the sediment into and out of coves, and they’re eating the rest of the clams there.”

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Clam harvesters participate in seeding project

September 8, 2014

Brunswick, Harpswell work together

BY ROSANNA GARGIULO Times Record Staff



MORE THAN 20 CLAM HARVESTERS from Brunswick and Harpswell participated in Saturday's seeding effort. Evan Patierno, above, a marine biologist with Resource Access International, seeded and netted plots at Strawberry Creek, a conservation area in Harpswell. ROSANNA GARGIULO / THE TIMES RECORD BRUNSWICK

Thunderstorms clung to the edge of the horizon as volunteers hurried Saturday afternoon to seed half a million baby soft-shell clams across the intertidal flats of Brunswick and Harpswell.

The seeding project — the first in Harpswell in more than a decade and the first in living memory to be jointly undertaken by the towns — was carried out in an effort to rebound the soft-shell clam population which have suffered from green crab predation and ocean acidification.

More than 20 clam harvesters from Brunswick and Harpswell participated in the seeding effort — pooling resources from the Harpswell and Brunswick Marine Resources committees — and laid more than 25 nets over clam beds, despite internal debate about netting's efficacy.



INVASIVE EUROPEAN green crabs caught in a modified trap in Harpswell. The crab population in Brunswick and Harpswell has not been as high this year as last after the severe cold winter, but significant numbers are still being trapped in some areas along the Mid-coast. Brunswick Marine Resource Officer Dan Devereaux instructed harvesters on how to cut the net, in 25-foot-long increments, and zip tie buoys in three rows of three at the front, back and center of the nets.

“This is the kind of thing they would be doing if they were doing aquaculture,” said Devereaux. “So they can each cut a net and learn the skill.”

Roughly one-third of Brunswick’s flats are under conservation closures, said Devereaux, which ban any type of harvesting that disturbs the mud. Buttermilk Cove and Woodward Cove — locally called the Big Bull Pen — are part of a pilot project. Last week, the Thomas Point Beach flats were also closed for harvesting, he said, as 70 percent of the clams there are at a sublegal size.



VOLUNTEERS CUT NETS from a roll of netting and zip-tied buoys in rows to each net. Netting is used to keep baby clams safe from green crabs and other predators, but the rolls are expensive — \$700 for 300 feet — and can foul if not maintained. Overall, a higher percentage of Brunswick is closed for harvesting now than in the past eight years.

“We’re really trying to get a grip on developing the best methods to deploy to keep the crabs in check in these two areas,” said Devereaux of Buttermilk and Woodward coves.

Placing netting over seeded clam beds protects the baby clams — or spat — from predation, particularly of the invasive European green crabs. However, the netting is costly and placing it over the beds is laborintensive. Additionally, the netting has to be buoyed and kept free of debris to maintain a healthy environment for clam growth.

“I’d say in Harpswell they’re split 70-30 on the netting and reseeding,” said Deputy George Lee Bradbury, of the Cumberland County Sheriff Department Marine Patrol, noting that 70 percent were not in favor of the concept.

“It certainly works,” said Darcie Couture, the Harpswell Marine Resource Coordinator and principal of Resource Access International.

“This stuff is expensive though,” she added of the netting. “Just one roll of this netting is about \$700.”

A roll is 300-feet long, by 12-feet wide, said Couture, enough for approximately 12 nets.

“I cut as much as I could out of my roll — the town didn’t have to buy that,” said Couture, who brought 10 nets to be laid on Harpswell’s flats. “I’m carrying that cost and, in theory at least, they’re recoverable and I can use them for other projects.

“We’ll be netting some seed and leaving some seed unprotected,” said Couture. “Just because it’s so expensive, it’s not practical for us to plan to net our whole town. If we can have comparable survivability without it, that would be nice.”

At their Aug. 26 meeting, the Harpswell Marine Resources Committee agreed to partner with Brunswick on the project and purchased half of Brunswick’s order of 500,000 spat from the Downeast Institute hatchery.

Harpswell’s portion, 250,000 spat, cost approximately \$4,000, said Couture, which will issue from the Marine Resources Committee’s budget.

Nets also have to be cleared of debris, said Devereaux, and have to be secured with buoys so they lift when the tide comes in and clear sediment from the surface.

“Anything that you put in the water that catches algae and plankton — it fouls and gets heavy,” said Devereaux. “We put a lot of buoys on ours. People that don’t buoy and just net, what that does is smothers it so the clams can’t get up through the blanket of algae and they end up essentially suffocating.”

Before netting is laid, the volunteers roughed rows of mud up with rakes and broadcast clam seed into the furrows, “just like seeding your garden,” said Couture.

In Strawberry Creek, a conservation area in Harpswell unanimously approved by the Board of Selectmen in June, Evan Patierno and Jason Viggiano, marine biologists with Resource Access International, planted two beds, laid one net and broadcast additional seed.

“The goal was to get it done by dead low so they had time to settle in and weren’t pulled out by the tide,” said Viggiano of seeding the beds. “We want to get them in as quickly as possible — they’ve already been in refrigeration for two days and we really don’t want to keep them out longer than that.”

“We’ve done a bunch of ocean acidification testing, so we test sediment for pH levels and test the water for salinity levels,” said Patierno. “Everything we do is geared toward helping people who are actually working — it’s not just research — we are here to help out the industry.”

Couture said they will return regularly to check on the netted and seeded areas. “I think everybody is going to be curious to see how it goes,” she said. “This is a big event.”

“The real question is, how will things look next summer?” said Couture. “Will they live, will we have good growth, will they be able to get in there and dig all those bushels out? We’ll see.”

[Return to top](#)