

DAMARISCOTTA-NEWCASTLE HARBOR COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES 5/15/19

All Committee members were present: Michael Herz, Chair; Bernie DeLisle; Steve Hufnagel; Gisela Rhodes; Eric Peters, David Lawrence; Paul Bryant, Harbormaster, Alan McKinnon, past Chair

The Harbor Committee hosted a public meeting and invited area aquaculture farmers & local sailors to attend. Over 24 guests were present including representatives of major oyster farms in the river & citizens of the two towns.

The purpose was to facilitate communication & an open dialog with sea farmers about the scope, scale & future trends of current oyster growing in the river estuary & to air concerns about its shared use. Of specific interest are leases in the Inner Harbor & Outer Harbor area (southern boundary on the east side is the Damariscotta town line & west side, the Newcastle town line). The number of acres under lease in the two areas was estimated to be approximately 120 acres. Oyster farming occurs within leases that contain either bottom or surface gear. The corners of each lease area are marked with buoys labeled "Sea Farm" & reflective tape. However, the type of farming within the lease area is not indicated.

There was an extensive exchange of information about oyster farming. The acquisition of leases within public waterways is a lengthy process and it is incumbent upon the applicant to have dialog with abutting landowners. Because oysters grow faster in the presence of good nutrient flow, desirable areas are often adjacent to, but cannot be in, the navigable channels. The sea farmers said boating within the lease areas for bottom growing is not restricted. Boating within the lease areas with surface and suspended farming gear can be dangerous for boaters and damaging to gear. Of particular concern for sailors is the ability to tack. Sea farmers have been willing to create tacking lanes within their surface/suspended gear lease areas & such considerations have become lease conditions in the past.

There also was discussion about the carrying capacity of the river (density of farming & other activities that can be tolerated) as well as consideration of factors that might lead to or inhibit future expansion of aquaculture activities. Representatives of the industry suggested that the evolution of gear, e.g., increased use of bottom cages leading to more efficient grow out, might reduce the rate of expansion. After an hour and half of excellent discussion, there was consensus on a number of items discussed:

1. Education about oyster aquaculture in the Damariscotta River is highly beneficial for all local citizens & visitors who use the River for commercial or recreational sailing, power boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, canoeing, etc.
2. It would be helpful if sea farm marker buoys were standardized using colors that also indicate the type of oyster farming occurring within the leased area (bottom or surface). Eric Peters will coordinate implementation of this idea with local sea farmers with the goal of having buoys that indicate by color the type of lease they are marking. It would also be helpful if harbor maps and charts identified all leases and be color-coded to indicate whether they are bottom or surface/suspended gear farms. Mike Herz volunteered to pursue this with his contact at DMR. (It was suggested that in the past DMR may have mapped leases this way.) Steve Hufnagel from the committee and Smokey McKeen representing the sea farmers will pursue.
3. Consideration will be given to some form of posting of information at the Damariscotta Town Landing about safely using watercraft adjacent to the numerous aquaculture leases present in the Inner & Outer Harbor areas.
4. The committee & the sea farmers will look for opportunities to expand information & education about aquaculture activity in our harbors for area citizens and visitors.
5. Not less than annually, the Committee will invite sea farmers, sailors & the public to dialog sessions about aquaculture in the Harbor areas of the Damariscotta River.

Following the public session, the committee met in executive session. It was agreed that occasional dinghy permits may be issued independent of moorings for \$5.00 when approved by the Harbormaster.

The Damariscotta Public Works director announced that a video camera will be installed at the town landing & monitored by the Damariscotta Police Department. He also reported that the town landing dinghy docks & temporary tie-up docks are reaching their 10-year cycle so may be eligible for replacement by the State. It was agreed the current "F" configuration & keeping the docks at the current height is serving well our recreational & commercial watercraft at the town landing.

It was agreed that it would be useful to have signage at the town landing directing viewers via QR codes or web addresses to town office websites for specific info about use of watercraft in the Harbor & at the Town Landing. With the landing located in the Damariscotta parking lot, it is assumed the Damariscotta town website would be

the source to which one would be directed for harbor information. Similar information should be available on the Town of Newcastle & the Chamber of Commerce websites.

Eric Peters offered to be the conduit to communicate to the Sea Farming community.
With no further business, the Committee adjourned at 9:30.

David Lawrence, acting secretary.