

Minutes of the Weymouth Conservation Commission
Special Meeting with Brad Chase, Division of Marine Fisheries
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Weymouth Town Hall
September 11, 2013

Present: Steven DeGabriele, Chairman
George Loring, Commissioner
Anthony Merlino, Commissioner
Tom Tanner, Vice-Chairman

Absent: Scott Dowd, Clerk

Also Present: Mary Ellen Schloss, Administrator

Commissioner DeGabriele called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm at the Town Hall, Council Chambers, 75 Middle Street, Weymouth, MA.

Discussion with Brad Chase, Division of Marine Fisheries

Ms. Schloss explained that the Whitman's Pond Working Group was looking for additional assistance from the Division of Marine Fisheries regarding the impact of various vegetation management techniques on the herring fishery. Brad Chase of DMF offered to meet with the Conservation Commission to discuss the issues. Members of the Whitman's Pond Working Group had been invited to this meeting to help deepen the discussion.

A summary of the discussion follows:

- A range of issues relative to vegetation management were discussed, including winter drawdown and herbicides. Mr. Chase stated that Whitman's Pond has some of the highest density plant biomass he's seen in a river herring spawning ground and agreed that the pond is changing drastically and we need to do something.
- Mr. Chase stated that DEP has not been looking too favorably at drawdown and that a careful study to fully understand and quantify the refill rate will be critical to permitting success. He asked whether drawdown could be used in conjunction with efforts to improve the shoreline (removing vegetation and sediment, reworking some areas to provide additional gravel for spawning substrate).

- Mr. Chase stated that because there are so many unknowns about impacts of herbicides on eggs and larval herring, the DMF would want herbicide applications in the pond to be done only after June 30. Of most concern to water quality and fisheries are the impacts on dissolved oxygen (due to dead and decaying plants). Monitoring should be done with initial applications such that all can learn from what is done. We might want to do a small section of the pond and see how it works. Limnological curtains could be used to isolate the treated area if it was felt this was needed.
- The Commission discussed the need for a consistent and reliable source of funds for pond management, acknowledging that the pond is going to need ongoing management for the foreseeable future. The funds must be worked into the budget.
- The town might be able to attract more outside funding for vegetation management in Whitman's Pond if we are able to frame our work, and our funding requests, in such a way that other communities can learn from what we are learning. The Commissioner of Fish & Game is clearly interested in Whitman's Pond and the Back River given its critical environmental functions. We need to keep state officials and elected leaders aware and involved with what's happening here.

Adjournment

The next meeting of the Conservation is scheduled for this same evening, September 11, at 7:00 pm at Town Hall.

Cmmr. Loring made a motion to adjourn at 6:50 pm and was seconded by Commr. Tanner.

VOTED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted by,

Mary Ellen Schloss
Conservation Administrator

Approved by:



Scott Dowd, Conservation Clerk