

Fisheries Update

Alewives Gain Access to Seal Cove Pond



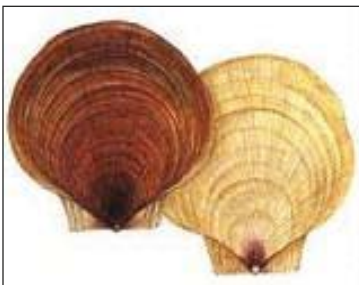
Diadromous fish are fish that spend part of their lives at sea and the other part of their lives in freshwater. They are also referred to as migratory fish. Alewives are a common medium-sized diadromous fish that are native to Maine coastal waters. They spend most of their adulthood at sea but return to freshwater streams and lakes to spawn. Other diadromous species include striped bass, Atlantic salmon, shad, and sturgeon. Unfortunately two hundred years of dam building on our lakes and ponds has restricted alewives from their native spawning grounds and as such their population numbers have gradually declined over time.

Recent local efforts however have focused on restoring fish access to local ponds and streams. Seal Cove Stream is a small coastal stream in Tremont that leaves Seal Cove Pond and drains into Blue Hill Bay. However the dam at the base of the pond has restricted fish passage for the past century. This fall however, a fish ladder was built that will enable alewives to get over the dam and gain access to the pond. Efforts such as these throughout the Gulf of Maine should eventually increase the number of native alewives and other diadromous species. This restoration project was part of federal funding administered and managed by Natural Resource Conservation Service.



Roz Davis Designs

DMR Closure Protects Bay Scallop Brood Stock



In an effort to restore scallop and urchin stocks in near-shore waters in Maine, the DMR Advisory Council recently approved statewide regulatory changes including several scallop fishing closures along the coast and specifically in Blue Hill Harbor and Morgan Bay.

The closure was established based on recommendations from both area fishermen and the Scallop Advisory Council and effects both dragging and hand harvest (diving). The decision was substantiated by scientific information gathered from DMR's 2008 Scallop Survey, which indicates that the harbor has an exceptionally high abundance of scallop seed that should be protected until statewide stocks increase. It is hoped that the seed produced in Blue Hill Harbor and Morgan Bay will travel with the bay's circulation currents and become distributed throughout the bay ultimately enhancing scallop stocks, which have been down substantially the last few years.

According to the DMR website, the closure encompasses the area north of a line drawn from Stills Point, Blue Hill Neck to the most northern point of Long Island, and north of a line drawn from the most northern point of Long Island to the most southwestern point of Newbury Neck. For more information visit the DMR website at <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/rm/scallops/09-21-09regs.htm>

Buying Local Helps the Bay

For generations, local fishermen fished for groundfish a few months of the year in order to supplement their lobster fishing income. These species, such as a haddock, cod, white hake, halibut, and winter flounder, were often sold locally in grocery stores, fish markets, or even door-to-door. However, stocks of these coastal-shelf groundfish have been greatly depleted in Downeast Maine due to both overfishing and ecological imbalances and consequently, not a single boat in the eastern region of the Gulf of Maine fishes for these species today. Since current state and federal groundfish permits are based on past catches, many Downeast fishermen have lost their rights to fish the area if and when the stocks do come back.

As a result of depleted stocks and the loss of fishing permits, most fishermen in our region today only fish for one species, lobster. If lobster stocks were to ever become depleted it could be the downfall of our local economy. In an attempt to diversify the fishery and the local economy, the Penobscot East Resource Center (PERC) has established a Community Supported Fishery (CSF) in partnership with area Food Co-ops that offers local shares in a direct market of seafood, such as lobster, shrimp, and hopefully groundfish in the future. The shrimp CSF has become quite popular the last 2 years. The creation of this “direct market” allows local fishermen to earn more by eliminating the middleman and harvesting at a loss. It also allows customers to pay less for fresh locally harvested and sustainably managed seafood. Another benefit to the CSF is a smaller carbon footprint because less seafood will be trucked to a processor. Selling locally also allows the fishermen to catch less fish in the long run if they want to because they could earn more money per pound. More fish and shellfish in the water may bolster the next year’s catch and add to the ecological diversity and abundance in the bay.



In addition to creating a local sustainable market for these fisheries, PERC has also been working to purchase fishing permits so that when fish stocks return, those permits will be available to Downeast fishermen. For more information contact PERC at 367-2708 or www.penobscoteast.org.