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Bill Trotter of BDN staff

Submerged rafts key in aquaculture plan

SORRENTO - A Hancock man has resubmitted to the state his application to grow mussels and scallops off Bean Island, but with this new proposal, there would be no rafts visible floating on Frenchman Bay. Instead, Babe Stanley would cultivate mussels on as many as 20 rafts submerged 10 feet below the water surface, according to Stanley's lease application.

A public hearing on Stanley's 10-acre, 10-year aquaculture lease proposal has been scheduled for 6 p.m. Tuesday, March 30, at the Sorrento Community Building on Route 185, state documents indicate.

At a September 2002 public meeting in Sullivan on Stanley's proposal, Sorrento residents who are active in their local yacht club told Stanley and state officials that in the summer they often hold boat races in the proposed lease area.

Stanley said Thursday that since then he has been in discussions with the Sorrento residents and with the environmental group [Conservation Law Foundation](#) about his proposal. He decided to use submerged rafts, he said, "to make a little peace."

The change has eliminated opposition to his proposal, according to Stanley.

"They're going to back us instead of fight us," he said of the recreational sailors and the environmental group. "It's going to work well for [all] of us."

Mary Costigan, Maine Department of Marine Resource's aquaculture hearings officer, also said Thursday that the revised application is a result of Stanley's negotiations with the Sorrento residents and with the environmental group.

Attempts on Thursday to contact Roger Fleming of Conservation Law Foundation were unsuccessful.

Another benefit from submerging the rafts is that they'll be less exposed to bad weather, according to Stanley. The proposed lease site is on the northern edge of a 4-mile-wide open stretch of the bay, he said, and may be prone to choppy seas in strong winds.

The location of the rafts would be marked by buoys floating on the water surface, according to Stanley's revised application. As in his prior submission, Stanley is proposing to cultivate the scallops in as many as 200 10-foot-high cages resting on the bay bottom approximately 50 feet below the surface.

If Stanley's application is approved, he will start out with a smaller operation and, if it goes well, work his way up toward the 20-raft limit, the fisherman said. He said how many rafts he would start with depends on how much money he can raise for the project. Stanley said he has withdrawn a separate application he had submitted to the state to cultivate oysters in nearby Taunton Bay. His decision to back out of that site has nothing to do with objections to the proposal raised by Taunton Bay shorefront residents, he said.

"Oysters are very labor-intensive and we've got too much else to do," he said. "We'll be busy enough with the mussels and the scallops."