



BLUE HORIZON

Friends of Blue Hill Bay

www.fobhb.org

Fall 2019

Issue 19

Hello to the Friends of Blue Hill Bay,

You are reading this newsletter on another day of seasonal change. The changes from summer to autumn are evident with cooler temperatures and the leaves changing color. On Blue Hill Bay the shoreline has taken on a more colorful pallet, flocks of birds are southbound and the lobster pot floats are fewer in number on the water.

At the Friends, 2019 has also been a year of change. The Executive Director, Bebe Moulton, has retired from her responsibilities to enjoy her interests and new challenges. We shall all miss Bebe and her ability to organize the many Friends events and to keep the members informed. In her place, the Board has granted me the opportunity to take the Friends through the upcoming years. I bring to the Friends my knowledge of marine science and geology and my experiences in environmental remediation, coastal engineering and petroleum exploration. I have also spent years serving in a volunteer capacity on multiple environmental commissions that provided guidance on a municipal, county, Federal and international level. I reside with my wife, Ellen, on Isle au Haut and I am in daily contact with the waters of the Blue Hill Bay area that we all enjoy and care about.

With the help of you and the Board I look forward to continuing the effort of the Friends to conserve the ecology and fisheries of Blue Hill Bay.

Mike Fedosh
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Army Corps of Engineers Blue Hill Harbor Dredging Study

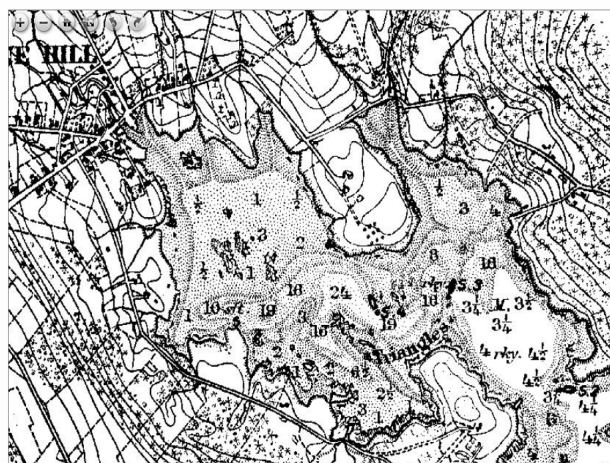
Dredging a channel to the Blue Hill town dock is once again on the front burner. There has been talk of dredging a channel since the 1990s. In 2012, at a request from the town of Blue Hill and other state agencies, an Army Corps of Engineers assessment plan was initiated. The Corps prepared an Initial Feasibility Study in 2013 for a 6-foot deep channel and turning basin in the inner harbor. In 2016 the Corps sampled harbor sediments and in 2018 requested funds for additional studies based on contaminants found in the harbor. To date the town has contributed \$104,000 toward the dredging studies. Initially the Corps estimated the cost of the dredging to be in the \$1 million range, with the town responsible for 10% of the cost up front and 10% once the project was finished. Most recently, the Corps estimated the dredging cost closer to \$3.5 million (\$700,000 to the town). The town will also be responsible for the cost of any dock facilities necessary to access the dredged turning basin.

While most everyone agrees there is a need for all-tides access to Blue Hill harbor, there are also some challenges. Access to the harbor for commercial fishermen and recreational users would be a huge benefit and downtown businesses could see more customers. These benefits will need to be weighed against the potential of increased traffic congestion, especially during the summer months, the cost of maintaining town docking facilities, any future dredging costs to the town and the potential for environmental impacts. Concerns have been raised about the possibility of seawater intrusion into local wells, however the Army Corps sees this as a non-issue.

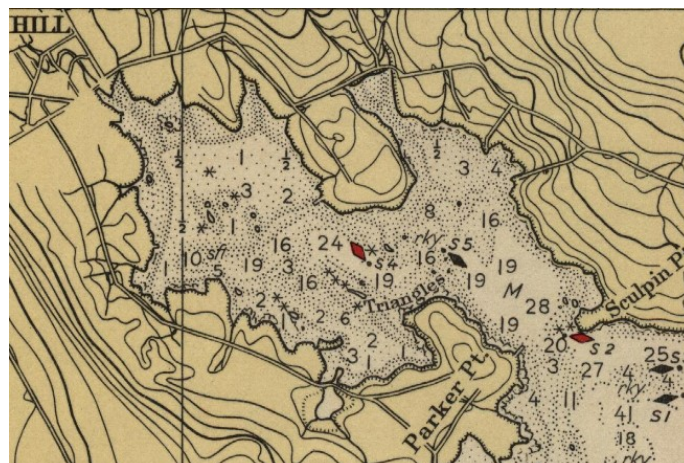
Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were detected in the sediment around the town dock and are attributed to historic fuel releases. PAHs are common contaminants associated with “heavier” fuels such as diesel and bunker oil as well as with coal ash and road runoff. The Corps proposes to bury the contaminated dredged material in an excavated pit in the harbor and then capped with clean sediment. The other dredged material may be disposed of off Tupper Ledge and Eastern Passage, both current approved spoil sites.

It needs to be recognized that the harbor, near the town dock, has historically been a mud flat since the first navigation charts of the area were produced. Once a channel is dredged the harbor will attempt to return to equilibrium by refilling the channel. In-fill material would be from channel sidewall slumping, circulation-borne sediment and the Mill Stream sediment. It is difficult to determine the actual environmental impact from the dredging or the potential future costs to the town for maintenance of the channel. Harder still is trying to determine what the impact of climate change and sea-level rise may have on not only this project but also our valued local fisheries and the harbor itself. It’s important that all stakeholders in this process have the opportunity to be heard and discuss the advantages as well as the challenges of this project.

The Blue Hill town selectmen will hold public hearings prior to determining whether additional funding for the dredging study and the dredging itself are appropriated.



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Blue Hill Harbor NOAA Charts

Blue Hill Bay Aquaculture Lease Update

There are two new aquaculture lease sites proposed for Great Cove on the east side of Bartlett Island in Blue Hill Bay.

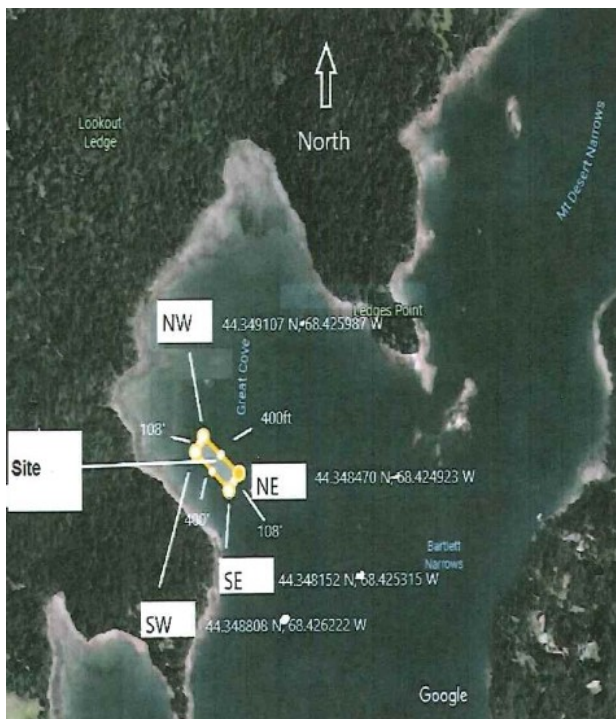
One is from Victor Doyle for a one-acre experimental lease to grow a variety of shellfish using suspended aquaculture gear. The public hearing for the lease is scheduled for October 28, 2019 at 5:00 pm at the Mount Desert Town Hall.

The second proposal is from Mussel Bound, Inc. for a 3.5-acre lease to grow shellfish using suspended aquaculture gear, specifically polar circles (large plastic circular arrangements with ropes suspended beneath). This is an expansion for the company that presently has the polar circles off the east side of Hardwood Island. No public hearing date has been set for this lease application but it will probably occur in November.

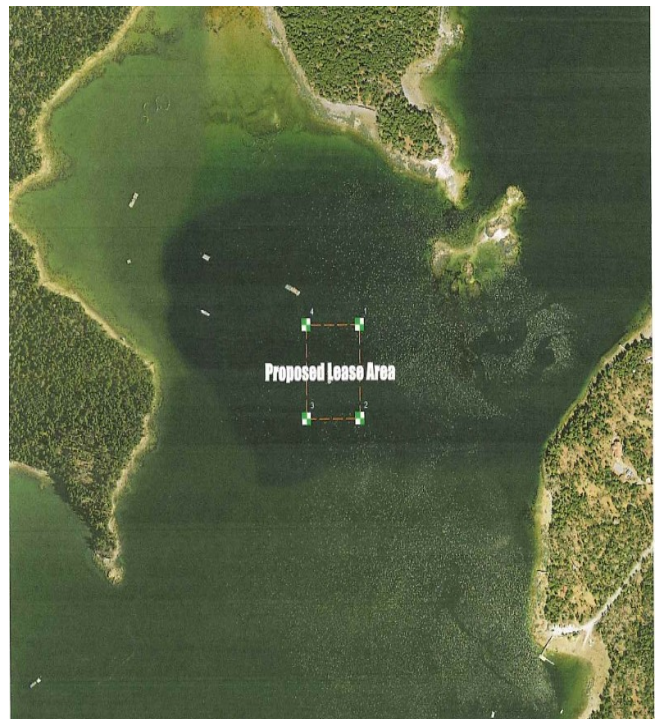
Friends of Blue Hill Bay continues to support sustainable, environmentally responsible shellfish and seaweed aquaculture. However, there are concerns about the density and environmental impact these two sites may have on Great Bay, and the impact on other commercial and recreational uses of the area. FOBHB will be represented and attend both hearings to better understand the extent of the aquaculture proposals and to express any concerns to the Maine Department of Marine Resources.

We thank you for all your continued support to see that Blue Hill Bay remains an environmentally healthy and economically valuable marine resource.

Friends of Blue Hill Bay, Board of Directors



Victor Doyle Location



Mussel Bound, Inc. Location



Friends of Blue Hill Bay

PO Box 1633

Blue Hill, Me 04614

Friends of Blue Hill Bay is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving the natural ecology, sustainable marine fisheries and the unique aesthetic quality of Blue Hill Bay. The health of the bay is important to everyone. To that end your contributions help toward the upkeep of a pump-out boat in partnership with the KYC and ensuring that aquaculture practices conform to all regulations and associated legal fees.

Thank you for your generosity!

Friends of Blue Hill Bay is a federal and state tax-exempt 501(c)3 corporation.

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