**Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, December 10, 2020, 5 – 6:30 pm

Zoom Meeting (due to COVID)

*Pending Approval 1/21/21*

Attendees: Tom Minogue, Sharon Minogue, Ralph Topham, Nancy Hathaway, Chris Stark, Heather Richard of the Shaw Institute, Annie Langston of Pemetic Sea Farms

1. **Minutes** of last meeting – approved
2. **Treasurer’s Report** – haven’t spent any money since the last report
3. **Pemetic Sea Farms** and the Union River Bay, Surry

Heather introduced Annie Langston Noll of Pemetic Sea Farms that Annie and her husband founded. Dr. Anne Langston Noll, has a PhD, MSc, MA, and BSc in marine biology, sea farming, research, and is a farmer-educator, who encourages public involvement in aquaculture. They offer free outreach programming to schools in Bucksport, Surry, Penobscot, Castine, and Ellsworth (available upon request). Annie helped found the Aquaculture Search Institute at UM 10 years ago and currently has two oyster farm sites on the Union River Bay in Surry. One is near the radio antenna towers on Newbury Neck and the other is near the mouth of Patten Bay. The business is committed to sustainable aquaculture and does research and education. They also will be expanding to scallop and winter kelp aquaculture and have 2 other sites by Bartlett Island and Milbridge. Annie said that Union River Bay is a healthy and diverse bay with good algae blooms. They will start selling oysters on December 23 from Linda Greenlaw’s home.

Ralph asked about whether mussels, oysters and/or kelp can be used for fecal amelioration in a closed area by the mouth of Patten stream and as near as practical to Flood stream. Annie said that shellfish grown in a designated area for that purpose could be used for compost, but not human consumption research. She said we should first determine whether the Ellsworth wastewater facility is introducing contaminants into Patten Bay or not and, if so, how effluents travel into the bay. We could also research waste dilution regulation regarding the Ellsworth facility before applying for a license to grow shellfish in a designated area. Felicity Newman was mentioned as someone who composts coastal products. She recommended that we contact the Department of Marine Resources about exploring a shellfish restoration project with the intention of reopening the bay to shellfish harvesting.

1. **Patten Bay Project Update** – Heather Richards (provided a power point presentation with her research to date)

Heather said that the microbial source from the Patten Stream outlet and the Flood Stream emptying into Patten Bay was identified by UNH to be mostly bird feces. She said that other communities have had similar results with their tests and we could possibly collaborate with them to purchase testing kits for this area. Heather also recommended having a group of volunteers to do waterfowl and mammal surveys. We might also want to find out if there are chickens raised near the stream. Heather pointed out that we had a very warm/low rain year and that could have contributed to the high bird feces bacterial count. Other ideas would be to conduct aerial photography, continue to conduct tests of temperature, dissolved oxygen, salinity, PH, turbidity at different depths. We also could explore movement of water in the bay. Heather mentioned that high salinity and lower PH could be indicators of coastal acidification

In exploring shellfish restoration in Patten Bay we might explore potential partnerships Pemetic Sea farm and clam diggers as well to apply for grants for further studies. Heather reviewed the current focus for 2021 which are: **the Green crab project, shellfish surveys, continued bacteria and WQ Sampling, Quality/control –assurance, Avian pop surveys.**

This means the Surry Conservation Commission might **explore hiring interns, collecting weather station data, and exploring collaboration with other groups for potential grants**

**Heather also recommended expanding Outreach activities with Under Canvas education program, the Surry community, the Maine shellfish restoration and resilience website, news articles/webinars**

1. **Planning Board Update** 12/17 – Thomas Minogue next week

Bring up Solar Farms – substation. Borrego Solar Farm -clean up cost for the site

1. **Carrying Place purchase through possible mitigation grant** – Nancy Hathaway Need to look at the property (Sunday Dec 13 – 11:30 am Town Map), explore possible collaboration with Surry, such as the Wabanakis (their status with carrying places),Blue Hill Heritage Trust relationship. It was discussed that the parking lot, used by Surry residents to access the beach, a trail and conserving the wetland area would be important for the town to consider.

– submitted by Chris Stark, secretary

**The next meeting will be on zoom on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 5 pm.**