



Friends of Taunton Bay Newsletter

No. 47

Keeping an eye on the bay

Summer 2014

Public Conversation on Environmental Threats to Taunton Bay

By Alan Gray

On Thursday March 20th, Friends of Taunton Bay (FTB) hosted a public meeting to gather local information about various threats to Taunton Bay's marine environment. Against the backdrop of statewide alarm about eelgrass loss and green crab infestations, FTB's Executive Board wanted to hear about local conditions, how we can best move forward with monitoring, and if any other actions are warranted.

Attendees included FTB board members, several people who make their living on the water, and experts who have studied the bay in the past.

FTB knew from our own observations that eelgrass loss was dramatic last year. This was confirmed by several people who work on and in the bay. It was noted that in past eelgrass die-back years, intact dead grass plants were found along the shore. In 2013, however, what was found along shorelines were shredded bits of grass, implying that it had been chewed off. 2013 also saw an increase in water turbidity. There was speculation that loss of eelgrass is contributing to this problem.

FTB knew there are green crabs in Taunton Bay, but not to what extent. We learned they are present in force. Mike Briggs of Taunton Bay Oyster Company noted they have seen a 100-fold increase lately – from one or two crabs per 100 bags of oysters to one or two per bag. Mike's operation has set traps for the crabs, then ground them up to re-bait the traps.

There was some speculation that ground Green Crabs would work for lobster bait, and would probably be cheaper than current

bait. There are reports that in Canada there is some active exploration of this notion. This is one of many ideas about turning the Green Crab problem into an economic opportunity.

Taunton Bay has been much studied, but not recently. It was already apparent to FTB's board that monitoring needs to be restarted, and conversations have been occurring since late 2013 to begin to shape, and fund, that effort. Attendees at this meeting were solidly behind restarting monitoring efforts.

General Conclusions:

- Basic monitoring must be restarted at several locations – water temperature, salinity, turbidity
 - The monitoring program needs to be sustainable – a basic program carried out over a longer timeframe is more useful than short bursts of elaborate studies.
 - Scientifically defensible methods must be employed – otherwise it is just scattered data
 - Multiple monitoring sites to include shoreline, offshore devices to be checked by small boat, and possibly a deep water location
 - This is bigger effort than FTB board members can hope to accomplish on our own. Help will be needed – volunteers, student interns, possibly some professionals, and people who are on the bay regularly. We should reach out to the bay's lobster harvesters.
 - Over the next few years, we'll want to closely monitor mating Horeshoe Crab numbers, to determine if juveniles are being affected today. Loss of current year's young won't be apparent in the breeding population for several years.
 - Appropriate role for FTB board may be as coordinators of scheduling, training, and follow-ups
 - We own or have access to some of the equipment needed (Secci disks, etc.).
 - Previous studies will provide a powerful baseline – need to retrieve, collate and standardize
 - COA student interns can be used to organize data, both the newly gathered and results from past studies.
 - FTB should contact researchers who have independently studied Taunton Bay in past, notably DMR's Water Quality Lab in Lamoine.
 - Contact various organizations looking statewide at green crabs and eelgrass loss, and see if they have any Taunton Bay data – or would like to include 'the bay' in their studies.
 - Hancock County has several funding sources available – a potential source for 2015 funding
 - Preview of next invasive: the Asian Shore Crab has been seen in mid-coast areas, but hasn't made it here. Yet.
- Updates to the 2014 plan will be presented at the July 11 Member's Meeting.



The invasive European Green Crab (*Carcinus maenas*), generally around 3 inches wide, with 5 spines on each side of the eyes. Carapace (shell) is roughly pentagon shaped. The crabs can be green, brown or red.

Letter From the President

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find details of a number of recent and planned events:

- A report on our Green crab and Eelgrass conference
- Receipt of a grant from Maine Community Foundation for development of educational “Bay Bags” for use at the Taunton Bay Education Center and by schools and families
- An exciting list of Friday evening programs
- Our sixth annual summer camp announcement
- Physical changes at Gordon’s Wharf, installation of kayak launch access
- An August fundraiser at the Salt Box Restaurant

In addition, several anonymous donors have funded two initiatives: a half-time intern from the College of the Atlantic, to be supervised by Professor Chris Petersen, and some other activities which will be part of our response to the loss of eelgrass. More information about this will be presented at our Member’s Meeting on July 11.

All of this is made possible by a hard-working executive committee, several other dedicated volunteers and some good neighbors on the Bay.

It is time for membership renewals so we can continue to fund this spectrum of activity. It is also a good time to offer your time to help with camp or Friday programs; lead a paddle, hike or tour; or donate equipment we can use such as internet-capable computers, scientific equipment, etc.

With great appreciation for your past support,
Frank Dorsey, President

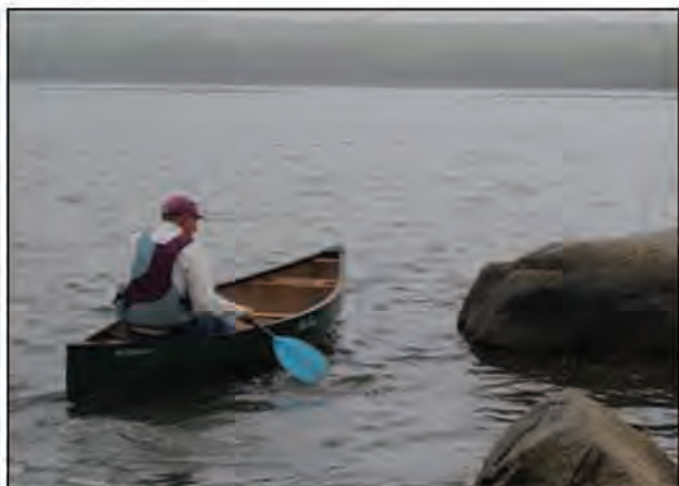


Photo by Lisa Herrington

Frank Dorsey patrolling for this year’s mating horseshoe crabs from foot of former Lincoln Wharf on Hancock shore.



Photo by Lisa Herrington

Campers from 2013.

Summer Camp

by Lisa Herrington

For the last five summers, Friends of Taunton Bay has sponsored a children’s environmental summer day camp focused on supplementing the child’s natural curiosity about their world.

For our sixth year, the theme is “Arts Around the Bay”. We will be enjoying short walks around the center to gather natural items to use for making our art. Some of the projects will be, clay tiles and kiln making, t-shirt fern prints, paper making, ink and paint making, stone crafts, natural plant dyeing and weaving. We are very excited to have local artists visit and demonstrate their techniques and work with campers on projects.

The 2014 camp dates are; July 15-17 and August 5-7, 9:30 am-12 noon. The price is \$20 per camper. Scholarships are available. Please contact us for information at 207-423-1414 or visit our website www.friendsoftauntonbay.org.

New Science Kit ‘Bag Program’

by Lisa Herrington

We are very excited to announce that Friends of Taunton Bay has received a grant from the Maine Community Foundation for purchase of materials for a series of educational science kits. These themed kits will have professional equipment, books, games, instructions, and hands-on activities for multiple ages of children.

Themes will include Tree Identification, Knot Tying, Pond Life, Birds, Bones and Scat, Geology and of course, Horseshoe Crabs. The various kits in their ‘program bags’ will be available to borrow



Photo by Lisa Herrington

Members of Downeast Chapter of Maine Audubon walking shore during Horseshoe Crab matig season.

or to use at our Taunton Bay Educational Center at Gordon's Wharf this summer.

We hope teachers, scouting groups, clubs, libraries, homeschoolers, parents and others will come by to "check them out"!



Photo by Alan Gray

View from site of former Lincoln Wharf on Hancock shore at top of Taunton River. West Sullivan across river, Burying Island to left, Franlin in distance.



Photo by Alan Gray

View down the Taunton River.

Saltbox 2014 Benefit Fundraiser

In early August FTB will be following up on last September's highly successful fundraising event at the Salt Box Restaurant in Hancock. Alice and Mike have again offered their skills and services. As in 2013, we will be offering a fabulous 10-Course Tasting Menu, at \$65 per person (alcohol not included).

Please join us on Sunday, August 10.

Two seatings, 5 pm and 7:30 pm.

LINKS REGARDING GREEN CRABS

1) Hilary Neckles Paper:

www.seagrant.umaine.edu/files/2013MGCS/Neckles%20MGCS%202013.pdf

2) Green Crab Summit Website

www.seagrant.umaine.edu/green-crab-summit

3) Video of Green Crab Proliferation in Marsh

www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP4ITN-EcbY

MEMBERSHIP

Please consider renewing your membership – or joining The Friends of Taunton Bay. Contributions can be made using the enclosed envelope, or via the secure payment form on the Membership page at our website

www.frindsoftauntonbay.org



Friends of Taunton Bay - Newsletter
P.O. Box 411, Hancock, ME 04640-0411

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

TO CONTACT FTB:
207-423-1414
friendsoftauntonbay.org

Editors:
Frank Dorsey, Alan Gray
Page Layout:
Ashley Ehrlenbach Johnson

Improvements at Gordon's Wharf, New Kayak Ramp

By Alan Gray

A number of improvements have been made by the Town of Sullivan at Gordon's Wharf, site of FTB's Taunton Bay Education Center. The road has been repaired, drainage issues addressed, and the parking area in front of the TBEC building was cleared and expanded.

Most notably, a hand carry kayak/canoe/small boat launch access has been installed, leading down to the cove to the right of the base of the wharf area. At the bottom of the steps, the launch area is a rocky mudflat – so come

prepared. Bare feet are not advisable!! Commercial activity has been occurring here for 150 years.

This public access point is the only one on the Taunton River, and a great addition. We intend to organize some paddles from here this Summer.

We hope that future improvements will include handi-capped accessibility to the Taunton Bay Education Center.



Photo by Lisa Herrington
New ramp at Gordon's Wharf.



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New ramp at Gordon's Wharf.