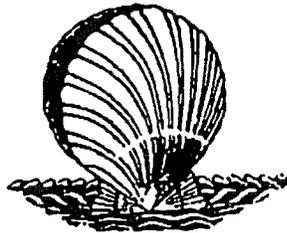


WATERFORD-EAST LYME SHELLFISH COMMISSION



Environmental Committee Public Hearing

Friday March 16th 2012

Testimony of the Waterford/East Lyme Shellfish Commission in support of H.B. 5447

Representative Roy, Senator Meyer, Members of the Environment Committee:

For the record my name is Eric Kanter, Co-chair Waterford/East Lyme Shellfish Commission and I am here to testify in support of H.B. 5447 AN ACT CONCERNING AQUATIC ANIMALS AS FOOD AND THE TAKING OF ESCALLOPS FROM THE NIAN TIC RIVER

The Waterford/East Lyme Shellfish Commission (WELSCO) is a state chartered commission, as opposed to a town commission, due to the political boundary of the towns in the Niantic River. Because of this division, WELSCO has state statute (sect. 26-287) pertaining only to it and the Niantic River.

The Niantic River has historically held a population of bay scallops (*argopectin irradians*). In decades past, large harvests were common and the need for management little. Recent harvests have been sparse, and WELSCO has been looking for ways to sustain, and hopefully increase yields.

The current statute in question dates from 1949, an era when the lifecycle of bay scallops (escallops) was little understood. The statute allows scallops over 2 inches to be taken and 3 bushels harvested. Today's science shows scallops mature between 50mm to 60mm (1.97" to 2.36"), with some variation¹. Studies have shown most 2" scallops to be immature and unable to reproduce.

Bay scallops generally live only 18 months to 2 years. They are spawned in the summer, grow, overwinter, spawn the next summer and die the following winter. Due to this brief lifespan, it is imperative immature scallops are not harvested and, if taken, are returned to the river alive to spawn the succeeding year.

The Waterford/East Lyme Shellfish Commission asks the legislature to update section 26-287 via bill 5447 by increasing the minimum size to 2½ inches and allow the commission to decrease the daily limit to reflect today's smaller population.

WELSCO believes these simple changes will better allow the Niantic River scallop population to remain healthy and sustainable, providing shellfishing opportunities for today and into the future.

Sincerely,

Eric N. Kanter

Co-chairman, Waterford East/Lyme Shellfish Commission

¹Reference: "Biology of the Bay Scallop", Leavitt, Roger Williams Univ. Karney & Surier Martha's Vinyard Shellfish.