
Communication from DMF to the Town of Scituate Regarding the Preliminary Eelgrass Survey Performed on June 23, 2022.

From: [Petitpas, Christian \(FWE\)](#)

Sent: Friday, July 15, 2022 7:38 AM

To: [Susan Harrison](#); [Mike DiMeo](#)

Cc: [Kennedy, Jeff \(FWE \)](#); [Bettencourt, Greg \(FWE \)](#); [Camisa, Matt \(FWE \)](#); [Williams, Holly \(FWE \)](#); [Lundgren, Gabriel \(FWE \)](#); [McKiernan, Dan \(FWE\)](#)

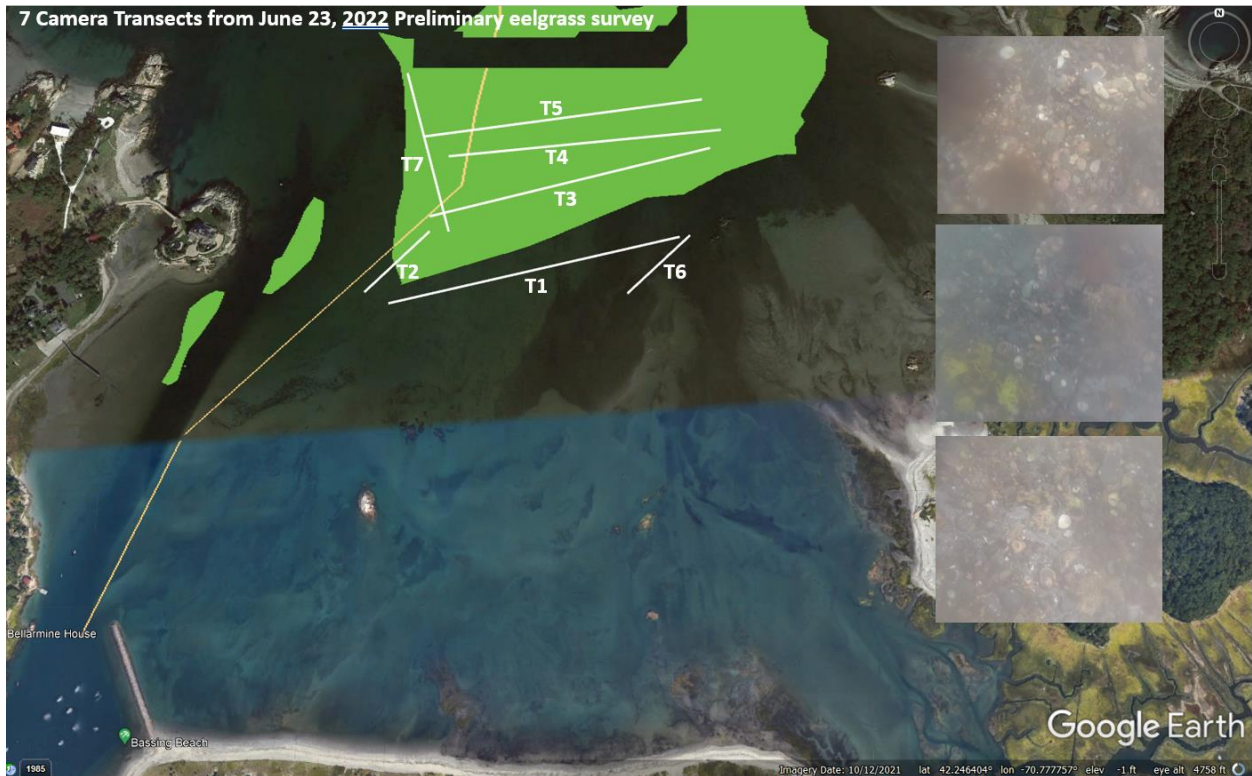
Subject: Scituate preliminary eelgrass survey in Cohasset Harbor

Good morning Mike and Susan,

I was able to review the still images from the preliminary eelgrass survey DMF performed on June 23, 2022 from approximately 1:00pm to 2:30 pm. Low tide was at 1:47 pm.

The purpose of this survey was to assess the feasibility of the Town of Scituate identifying 1-acre subareas suitable for private shellfish aquaculture given that MA DEP has mapped the area as eelgrass habitat based on aerial imagery. This survey did not serve to certify any sites for aquaculture, it was simply to assess whether there is enough area devoid of eelgrass and with a 50' buffer from eelgrass to warrant the town pursuing aquaculture in the area. The map below shows the locations of the seven transects that we occupied (see below for transect coordinates) relative to MA DEP's eelgrass map for the area and the town boundary between the Towns of Scituate and Cohasset (yellow/orange line).

Some representative images from the survey are superimposed on the map and additional images are attached. I was able to review the still images collected during the survey. While I was hoping for better quality imagery, the images were consistent with what we observed in real-time via the live-stream video camera. Additionally, a high level of water clarity during the low-tide survey allowed broad observations of the bottom habitat from the boat. The substrate is mostly hard bottom dominated by cobble and rock, and diverse assemblages of macroalgae. We were not able to positively identify any eelgrass in the surveyed transects and the hard-bottom sediment characteristics observed have low suitability for promoting eelgrass expansion into the area (See Short et al., 2022 attached). Based on these observations DMF has determined there is no compelling evidence to discourage the town from identifying 1-acre sites *potentially* suitable for private aquaculture within Scituate waters. Once sites are identified, the town Select Board must vote to approve licensing specific site footprints to specific aquaculturists at a duly advertised public hearing pursuant to MGL Ch 130 Section 60: Hearing on issuance of license; notice; publication. Once the town officially votes to approve the site(s) at a public hearing, the town must request certification from DMF and forward us the proof of advertising and minutes of the meeting. Barring new knowledge that would disqualify the site(s) for private aquaculture, DMF would then perform comprehensive surveys of the individual sites that would include infaunal shellfish surveys. The official certification surveys would supersede any previous observations. If DMF's survey supports the conclusion that issuance of an aquaculture license site at that location would not cause substantial adverse impacts on existing resources and fisheries, then DMF would issue a certification letter authorizing the town to issue a municipal license. Please do not hesitate to reach out for additional guidance.



Transect 1: Start 42.24835°, -70.77683° End 42.247480°, -70.781720°
 Transect 2: Start 42.24763°, -70.78213° End 42.248430°, -70.781070°
 Transect 3: Start 42.24860°, -70.78108° End 42.249520°, -70.776310°
 Transect 4: Start 42.24978°, -70.77612° End 42.249410°, -70.780790°
 Transect 5: Start 42.24968°, -70.78122° End 42.250180°, -70.776440°
 Transect 6: Start 42.24760°, -70.77773° End 42.248360°, -70.776670°
 Transect 7: Start 42.24841°, -70.78075° End 42.250560°, -70.781560°

Best wishes,
 Chrissy

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