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Nantucket Shellfish Management Plan

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Summary/Abstract

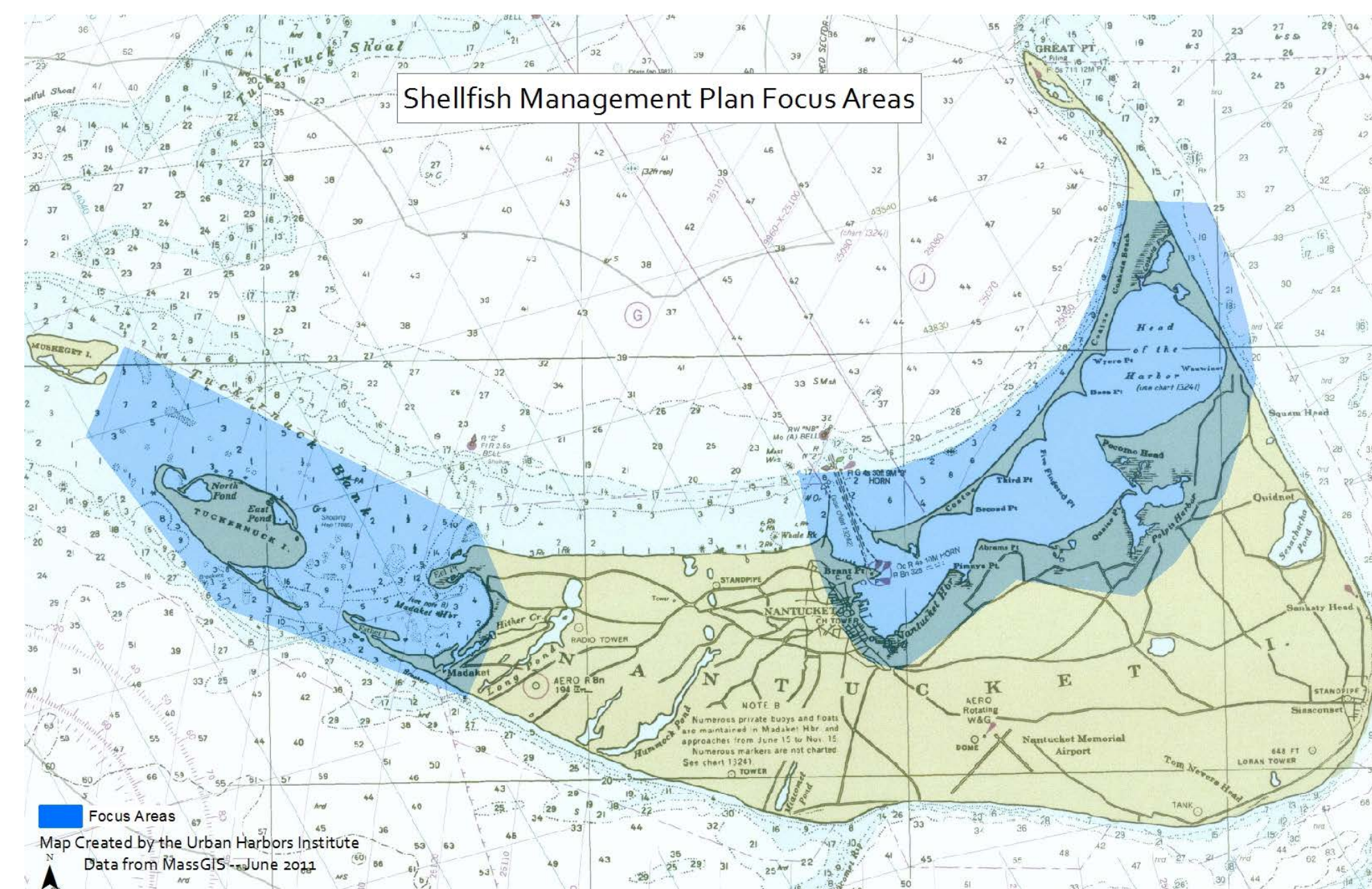
Nantucket's shellfish resources are an important part of the Island's history, culture, and economy. Nantucket waters support one of the country's last wild-caught bay scallop fisheries. Elsewhere along the Atlantic coast, fishing pressure, habitat loss, and disease have severely depleted bay scallop populations.

Although Nantucketers continue to make a living harvesting shellfish from the Island's waters, many do so with concern for the future of the resources and the habitats that support them.

UHI provided technical assistance to the community to develop a Shellfish Management Plan (SMP) that addresses issues of water quality, habitat loss, climate change, shellfish propagation, regulatory concerns, and the sustainability of the commercial and recreational fishery. Of particular value is the outline of future research needed to support management activities.

Species addressed include:

- Bay scallop
- Conch
- Mussel
- Quahog
- Oyster
- Soft-Shell Clam



For More Information about the Nantucket Shellfish Management Plan

Contact Kristin Uiterwyk at kristin.uiterwyk@umb.edu or 617-287-5570.

Goals and Objectives

A committee of fishermen, managers, scientists and citizens established the following goals for the Plan: The shellfish resources of Nantucket should be managed to support a viable and continuing shellfishery for both economic and traditional purposes by:

- Maintaining or improving the habitat associated with a healthy shellfish fishery, and
- Maintaining or enhancing the populations and health of scallops, quahogs, soft-shell clams, mussels, conchs, and any other shellfish of commercial and/or recreational importance in Nantucket waters.



Bay scallops being grown out in a Nantucket propagation facility

Approaches and Methods

The success of this SMP depends on early engagement and buy-in of members of the fishing community. To that end, extensive interviews were conducted with fishermen, wholesalers, and managers to obtain information and an understanding of their issues and concerns. A committee of fishermen, scientists (including those from the UMass's Nantucket Field Station), managers, and citizens met almost monthly for two years to review data and information; provide observations of the past and current shellfisheries, resources, and research; and develop goals and recommendations to address issues that might be contributing to the fluctuation of scallop harvests over recent years. Public meetings provided ample opportunity for the general public to participate in shaping the plan.

Results/Impacts

The Nantucket Shellfish Management Plan is a comprehensive document providing background information on habitat, shellfish species, the commercial shellfish industry, past and current fishing practices, participation rates in the commercial and recreational fisheries, harvest records, propagation efforts, and the fisheries management structure. The SMP identifies issues, establishes goals, and recommends actions for improving the sustainability of the resource and the Town's commercial fishing industry.

Despite the importance of shellfish to Nantucket, there are significant gaps in knowledge about some critical biological traits and habitat conditions. In order to address some of those gaps, the SMP includes a research plan for prioritizing data gathering activities and scientific studies to inform future management decisions. The SMP also includes a strategy for adapting management as new issues and information emerge.

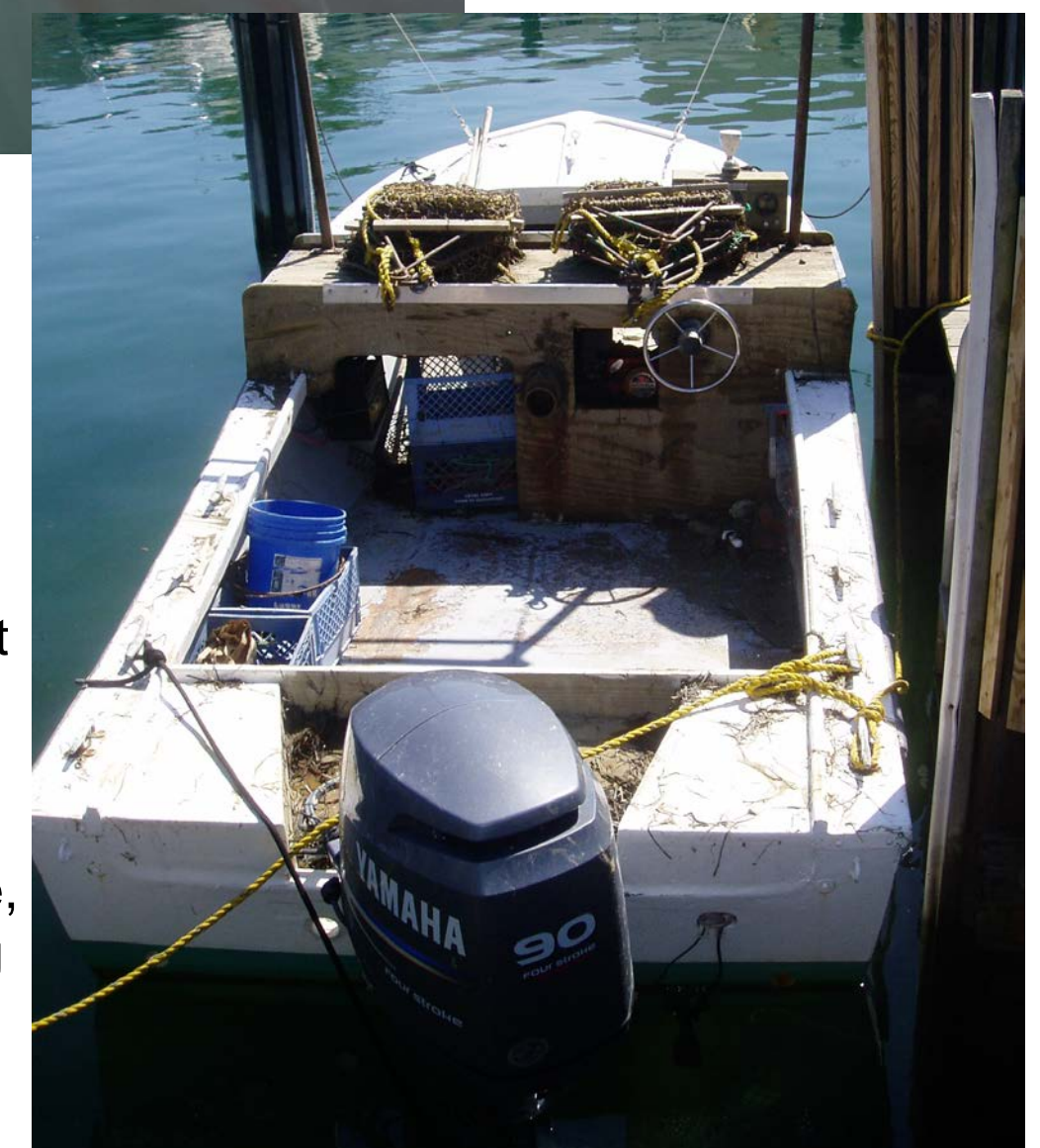
While shellfish management plans have been developed in the past, this is the first effort supported by the Town, and developed with input from fishermen, managers, and researchers.



(Above:) Rust Tide in Nantucket Harbor is thought to impair shellfish functions. (photo: Tara Riley)



(Left:) Plastic barrels hold shellfish grown at the Brant Point propagation facility.



(Right:) Small boats, usually carrying 1-2 people, are used for bay scalloping in Nantucket and Madaket Harbors.