

**Fact Sheet**  
**Falmouth Rotational Aquaculture Plan, May 2017**

Falmouth is a special place. Over the past 50 years, development has compromised estuarine water quality and led to significant loss of invaluable marine habitat. Our salt ponds, estuaries and harbors are the critical nurseries and rookeries for shellfish and finfish as well as birds and mammals that form the basis of a complex food web. Within our lifetime, we can start to return Falmouth's estuaries to the vibrant ecosystems they once were. Shellfish propagation is a key component of this restoration effort.

Shellfish aquaculture operates within a public resource which has multiple user groups. The overarching goal of the Falmouth Rotational Aquaculture Plan is to meet the needs of all these groups - growers, wild harvesters, neighbors, visitors, mooring holders, and taxpayers. The next steps in the planning process include:

- Presenting this plan to stakeholders, neighborhood groups and the general public; and
- Addressing implementation issues such as overwintering of shellfish and covering the costs of running this program in a way that is fair and equitable.

Below is an executive summary of the regulatory context and the objectives of the Falmouth Rotational Aquaculture Plan which are further detailed in the 80+ report (available online at <http://www.falmouthmass.us/862/Falmouth-Rotational-Aquaculture-Plan>)

- The town is trying to expand aquaculture AND increase municipal propagation for wild harvest AND address aesthetic concerns of neighbors AND meet regulatory requirements AND remove nitrogen in a quantifiable way for TMDL-compliance AND address the costs of implementing this plan.
- Expanding private aquaculture into estuaries using the rotational system makes sense for everybody. Growers benefit by having ideal growing locations; the local economy benefits from creation of new businesses and jobs; local restaurants benefit from the increased supply of local shellfish; commercial harvesters benefit by an enhanced wild resource; taxpayers benefit by a reduced cost of infrastructure to remove nitrogen from the water; and all residents, taxpayers and businesses benefit from the removal of microalgae to help clean up these impaired waterbodies. We believe these benefits can be attained without an undue burden to neighbors and other users of the waterways because placement of aquaculture areas has been carefully planned and moves annually so that no one area on the water is permanently affected.
- Without a rotational system, private aquaculture would only be allowed to expand in much less desirable offshore locations because:
  - Nine of fifteen estuaries in Falmouth are conditionally approved for shellfishing, and have historically enjoyed productive bottom for wild harvesting -- traditional, private

aquaculture is prohibited in these locations. The rotational system we are proposing addresses this issue from a regulatory perspective and thus opens these areas for private aquaculture; and

- Of Falmouth's fifteen estuaries, two are open for shellfishing and have historically had productive bottom. Private aquaculture cannot be located in areas with productive bottom. There are possibly one or two small sections of these estuaries are not productive areas, significantly limiting the potential for private aquaculture here. The rotational system accomplishes the goal of allowing private aquaculture to expand into these two open estuaries in Falmouth.
- The rotational system requires an operations manager to serve as a liaison with neighbors, to ensure transitions are managed and permit conditions are enforced. Someone from the Town needs to be both in the field and available to assist administratively for this level of commercial activity within our coastal ponds. This manager will also need to ensure the biomass of shellfish for nitrogen-removal is quantified and the quahogs are planted, maintained and harvested at appropriate times. This is a full-time job that is a direct result of expanding aquaculture in town.

The Falmouth Rotational Aquaculture Plan seeks to benefit all users of the town's estuaries, both economically and environmentally and balance the harvest goals of commercial, recreational, senior, and family diggers with aquaculture growers and town water quality goals.

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