

LUBEC: SOFTSHELL CLAM WILDSTOCK ENHANCEMENT



Town
Lubec



Watershed
Coastal



Project Type
Research & Recruitment

Background

Lubec's shellfish program has a long history. The town's economy and culture has always been closely tied to the sea. Clamming conditions in Lubec are unique: the mudflats are extensive, the tides can reach well over 20 feet, and clams take 4 to 7 years to mature to market size. There are currently 72 diggers with commercial licenses, and 11 student licenses.

Conservation Projects

In 2020, the Lubec Shellfish Committee conducted a biomass assessment focused on standing stock at four beaches: Old Campground Road, Lawrence's Factory, as well as a study of survival and growth at Pirate's Crick and Globe Cove. The Shellfish Committee plans on connecting with local elementary schools to involve them with these assessments in the future, which will build capacity to collect data and engage the youth in clam conservation.



Pirate's Crick mudflats on an overcast morning

Conservation activities for 2022 included brushing, building green crab traps, moon snail collar collection, and a 'How to Dig Clams' event focused on teaching students about laws, regulations, licensing, and the fundamentals of digging clams.



Collecting moon snail collars

Moon Snails

In 2010, Lubec started to experience and increase in moon snail populations. Moon snails are a type of predatory sea snail native to Eastern Maine and Canada. The snails prey on clams by either enveloping clams with their large foot and dragging them under the sand, or by secreting an acid to soften the clam shell and boring a hole. Female snails can live up to fourteen years. They lay eggs by emitting a mucous that adheres the sand grains around their bodies into a collar, dispersing thousands of eggs, then sandwiching the eggs with another layer of mucous. This casing is left in the sand for the eggs to hatch in mid-summer. Moon snail collar collection has become a part of Lubec's conservation program, and the number of collars is declining



Access

Access is a major challenge in Lubec and the shellfish committee is trying to address access in multiple ways. They work directly with landowners. Further, by introducing youth to clamming, harvesters in Lubec are expanding access to the knowledge and skills required to be successful on the mudflat.

Takeaways

The recent work in Lubec has been impacted by the pandemic, which led to delays in funding and approval, and the need to follow COVID protocols on the flats. However 2022 has been an active year. Members of the Shellfish Committee are committed to engaging youth as the next generation of harvesters.



Amanda Lyons digs up clams of several sizes on Mowry Beach

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