

CENTER POND ALEWIFE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES--MARCH 13, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM

Present were: Peter Roberts (chairman), Mark Alexander, Troy Wallace

The minutes of the April 6, 2011 meeting were read. Troy moved and Mark seconded they be accepted. They were unanimously approved.

The status of the Committee's intended plans to put the rights to fish Center Pond was discussed. The Committee reviewed the emails of early February between DMR and the Town mandating alewife fishing closure in Center Pond as of January 1, 2012. Also discussed was Peter's necessary immediate phone response to DMR's Nate Gray to see if it would be possible for the Town to 'fish-for-research-data' purposes by hiring two local people to fish seven days a week, 1-2 tides per day, counting fish and taking scale samples

The Committee also read the follow up letter that Peter had promptly sent to DMR with these specifics, without having taken the time for a Committee meeting. He pointed out that our Committee could rescind this letter if it did not approve of this action. Given the closure imposed by the ASMFC and DMR seems irreversible at this time, it was their unanimous consensus to move ahead with the plan as presented to DMR.

Mark has a couple of people in mind who might be interested in doing this research fishing for pay, and he was going to check with them. There was considerable discussion as to the best method of paying them. Would it be best by the hour, or a flat rate for each time they hauled the net, counted the fish, etc? Since this is the first time the Town has attempted this, there were no easy immediate answers. Mark was going to see what the individual(s) he had talked to thought would be most workable. Mark will get back to the rest of us.

No pelagic fishing licenses will be required for this research fishing, according to DMR.

Peter's proposed annual Center Pond Alewife Committee Report was read. It was pointed out that it was longer than usual, but that there were many details related to the forced closure by DMR that needed to be shared with the townspeople.

Troy moved and Mark seconded that the report be submitted as written. It was approved 3-0.

Peter shared what he had learned from the alewife presentations on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Fishermen's Forum in Rockland. Of particular interest were the narrated photo presentations by individuals representing eight alewife fishways east of here, each of which varied in sophistication and development. It was Peter's opinion that Phippsburg is fortunate to have developed its physical fishway to the point it now exists, compared to several of these other towns. It was also noted that DMR stocked North Haven's 45 acre pond with 2,500 adult fish (56 fish per acre), which far exceeds the 6 per acre limit that Phippsburg has always been told was the maximum permitted.

Our Committee has long believed that Center Pond was not being adequately stocked. Armed with this new information, Peter has requested that DMR dramatically increase

the number of fish annually stocked in Center Pond. Mr. Gray (DMR) has indicated this may be possible. If necessary, Phippsburg would be willing to buy these live adult fish from another fishway, if DMR would provide the tank trucking.

Until now, Phippsburg has not been a member of the Alewife Harvesters of Maine (AHM). This organization was formed a few years ago in an attempt to present a united voice to speak for the alewife fishery. Given the fact that various bureaucracies are threatening the fishery, Peter made a motion that Phippsburg pay the \$100 membership and join. Mark seconded. It was unanimously approved. The Chairman of our Committee will be put on the mailing list and will vote for the Town at future AHM meetings.

Peter informed the Committee that NOAA has been petitioned to declare the "River Herring" an endangered species, and is in the process of making such a determination. He also said that this "River Herring" grouping includes both 'our' true alewife and the blueback herring. While Maine's true alewife stocks seem healthy; the blueback herring stocks south of Maine apparently are not. The very real danger for Maine is that NOAA, by declaring 'our' true alewife as a "River Herring", may close Maine's alewife fishery under the Endangered Species Act.

Peter presented the Committee with a proposed article for the mandated 'closure for conservation' of Center Pond for the 2013 alewife season for consideration at this year's Annual Town Meeting. As presented, this article also has wording that would allow Phippsburg to consider putting the fishing rights out to bid if so permitted by DMR at some future time. The Town has to provide DMR with its fishing plan for the next year, and the intent of this article is to be compliant, yet keep the Town's options open should DMR change its mind regarding closure. Troy motioned, and Mark seconded to recommend the Town submit this fishing plan to DMR. It was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Peter K. Roberts, Chairman