



Lower and Outer Cape SEC Flyer

Hello Volunteers!

Summer is in full swing, and I took the opportunity to join our service partner, **Eastham Department of Natural Resources (DNR)**, along with some volunteers, as they did an ‘oyster cull’



Less a ‘cull’ than a program of sorting and ‘repackaging’ of the seed oysters, it was quite a learning experience, and a lot of fun.

In March of this year, the DNR bought over 100,000 ‘seed’ oysters. The seed oysters, which were about 1” long when purchased, were placed into (⇐) ‘float bags’.

With the floatation devices on the side of the bags, they remain horizontal when placed in the water, with the oysters collecting in the bottom of the bags.

These bags were placed in Salt Pond near the National Park’s visitor center, and connected by line from front to back in long rows. ⇨



Every second week, Natural Resource Officers would rotate (flip) each bag, helping to remove any unwanted buildup of marine life.



This past Tuesday, Natural Resource Officers recovered the float bags, one ‘string’ at a time and brought them to their work yard.

Assisted by volunteers, these bags were emptied onto a full sheet of plywood. The seed oysters had *doubled* in size since March!

The dead ones, lower right, were culled. Muscles (a type of shellfish)

removed, and all sea lettuce and other debris disposed of.





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The oysters were placed in (metal mesh) gabions. A piece of rebar was inserted in the middle of the longitudinal axis, and the gabion was suspended between two saw horses.

After attaching a rope, the ‘agitation’ or ‘tumbling’ process began.

This ‘tumbling’ process chips the edges of the oyster’s shells and causes the oyster to grow thicker instead of longer-translating into more oyster meat and less oyster shell.



After the tumbling, oysters are cleaned with a power hose to remove any algae or other debris from the shells.



The cleaned oysters are placed in float bags with a larger mesh and then returned to the Salt Pond where they will continue to grow until November when they will be ‘harvested’.

The DNR’s motto is **“H.O.G.S. & F. R. O. G. S. : Helping Out Growing Shellfish +Friends Revitalizing Our Green Spaces”**.

If you would like to assist ‘HOGS & FROGS’ with their varied volunteer opportunities, such as shellfishing projects (which includes culling, plant out and grow out, or routing maintenance) and maintaining conservation areas (trail maintenance, tree planting, invasive species removal or fire management), please let me know or contact them directly, (508) 240-5972!

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