



# CAPE COD COMMERCIAL FISHERMEN'S ALLIANCE

Small Boats. Big Ideas.

*An e-magazine about our fishing community –  
who we are, how we fish and our connection to the sea*

October 25, 2018

## Fish Tales

**Captain Greg Connors makes a living on the sea, but keeps his eye on the pond**

Greg Connors was one of the first to target the skate fishery years ago; now it's a staple of the fleet – Cape and Islands fishermen landed more than 7 million pounds in 2016, making it the third highest landed seafood for the region. He can fish for them year-round, while gillnetting dogfish is more of a summer fishery.



It's common enough for Connors and his crew to spend a day at sea, come to the fish pier and unload to his buyer, Marder Trawling, shower, and then go back out again at 1 a.m. On this day the trip takes place at a more "civilized" time, starting at 7:30, hauling in skates a few hours after setting dogfish gear.

The crew knows the routine and there is no shortage of joking around. A white hockey mask hangs in the wheelhouse, given to crewmate Jay Soares. Soares, who wields a knife with frightening speed, is often in the go-to position of arranging the skates in the enormous bin and cutting off the wings before they are iced. The skates come to him by way of Nick Kline, Nicky as they call him, and often enough a skate smacks Soares in the head as Kline passes fish quickly and laterally once he frees them from the net. Today Soares is not wearing the mask and from a garbled curse or two it sounds like he may have been hit not by a puck, but by an errant skate.

*The story continues here...*

## On the Horizon

We have lots of exciting stuff happening.



October is National Seafood Month. In celebration, we teamed up with *Eating with the Ecosystem* to challenge New Englanders to eat local sustainable seafood and share their experience using hashtag

#LocalSeafoodChallenge.

Throughout the month participants increased awareness of locally-caught, healthy (and delicious) seafood, which benefits ecosystems and supports our local fishermen. If you haven't already, be sure to like/follow us

on *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, and *YouTube*. Thank you to our seafood fans for celebrating the important role of seafood in our blue economy not just this month, but year-round.



The *Pier Host* program connects retired fishermen with people stopping by the Chatham Fish Pier.

Thanks to funding from our business sponsor, *Nauset Marine*, the program has engaged thousands of visitors each year from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. Traditionally pier hosts have focused on just fishing topics. This year we introduced sharks and seals as part of the hosts' talking points. To ensure we were providing



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## Plumbing the Depths

### New twist on a well-respected clam debuts to applause at Oysterfest

When you say surf clam, most people think of big sea clams caught off shore, often used for clam strips and chowders. When wild harvested, they have to be at least five inches wide. But in 2016 Massachusetts changed the regulations to allow shellfish farmers who grow surf clams on an aquaculture grant to harvest at 1.5 inches. At that small size they are tender and delicious.



“Small surf clams are not quite quahogs and not quite steamers,” says Melissa Sanderson of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance, one of the leads on two grant-funded initiatives to study, sample and promote small surf clams. “They have a harder shell than a steamer and a bit more belly than a quahog. They have a very clean and sweet flavor.” Currently, 96 percent of shellfish grown in Massachusetts are oysters, a “dangerous monoculture,” notes Sanderson. A harmful algae bloom or disease could be catastrophic, so with \$28 million in growers’ revenues at stake, working with surf clams gives local shellfish farmers a critical opportunity to diversify their businesses.

One of the Fishermen’s Alliance’s collaborations is with Aquacultural Research Corporation, A.R.C. Hatchery, in Dennis, and Barnstable County’s Cape Cod Cooperative Extension Marine Program. A.R.C. was awarded a two-year federal Saltonstall-Kennedy grant to determine best practices for a hatchery to spawn surf clams and grow them to the right size, and then determine what is the best way to farm them.

*The story continues here...*

*Enjoy a recipe here ...*

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## Aids to Navigation

Port study aims to protect, grow

accurate and consistent information, we partnered with the *Atlantic White Shark Conservancy (AWSC)* and *Northwest Atlantic Seal Research Consortium (NASRC)*. Our pier hosts were paired with trained representatives to provide expert answers to visitor questions. Additionally, our hosts were equipped with educational Pier Host program learning books made possible by our local sponsors: *Sunderland Printing*, *CARE for the Cape & Islands*, and *Fisherman’s Daughter Eco Boutique*. If you didn’t make it down to the pier, you can *download the learning book here*. Please join us in thanking our retired fishermen for their continued support as pier hosts: Mike Anderson, Ken Eldredge, Gerald "Rick" Miszkin and Mark Simonitsch.



We are co-hosting an event with the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce’s Blue Economy project to inform commercial fishermen and the local aquaculture industry about opportunities for offshore farming of oysters, bay scallops, mussels and sugar kelp in Massachusetts. The event is sponsored by SCORE Cape Cod and the Islands and runs from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 27, with a light dinner provided. The panel discussion, which includes regulators and farmers, is one of many ways we work to grow the local industry and make it more sustainable. For more information, contact [dennis.walsh@scorevolunteer.org](mailto:dennis.walsh@scorevolunteer.org), and to *sign up*. Space is limited.

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## On the Water

Ever wonder how a boat, or a fish, got its name? Want the word on what people are catching --- or how to cook it?

## commercial fishing industry

Ice.

Frozen water doesn't seem like an enormously important item, but in the fishing industry it's paramount and impacts both the bottom line and peace of mind.



Bismore Park on Hyannis Harbor has no ice machines. So, in addition to perennial problems making room for all the fishing boats that need dockage, it's possible that a fisherman – who was on the water at 3 a.m. – might have to drive to Provincetown almost 12 hours later to get ice for the following day.

Route 6 from Hyannis to Provincetown on a summer day seems grueling, particularly when there are ice machines in Chatham. But ice there provides its own challenges; you have to lug it in totes, whereas in Provincetown a machine will just blow it in for you. But then again, you can't use the Ptown ice blowers after hours because they are loud and the noise bothers neighbors.

Ice. Just one factor in a litany that helps define whether a port works well, one of many often overlooked by those on the outside.

*The story continues here ...*

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## Charting the Past

**Shiverick's ships: wooden boats immortalized by a stone**

If you drive from Bridge Street in Dennis, crossing over Sesuit Creek and turning down a charming stretch of Sesuit Neck Road, you will find yourself at Sesuit Harbor,



home to the town of Dennis' docks, Northside Marina, and the popular Sesuit Harbor Cafe. Don't be too intent on a pleasure cruise or lobster roll to miss a plaque embedded on a stone placed on the rise above the town marina's parking lot.

Dedicated in 1924, it commemorates Shiverick Shipyard, which once filled the environs with the sounds of hammers, axes and saws, and sent to sea magnificent multi-masted vessels. From 1815 until 1863, the family-owned enterprise produced dozens of vessels for fishing, commerce and international shipping. They were the only builders of glorious clipper ships on Cape Cod, manufacturing eight in the period from 1850 to 1862.

The patriarch of the family, Asa Shiverick, was born in Falmouth, son of a minister. He moved to East Dennis during the War of 1812 and bought land that backed up to Sesuit Creek. He began building ships in 1815, crafting schooners and brigs used by local



Rob Martin was on the water late this summer and got one of those surprises the ocean sometimes offers; thousands of little fish, armed with sword-like noses, hurling themselves into his boat. Martin, who has been lobstering for decades, had never before seen this version of a flying fish, blue-ish above, bright-silver-sided, red-finned.

It was before dawn, he was heading to his grounds in Cape Cod Bay and beyond to Stellwagen Bank, when he saw them. Days later he still didn't know what they were and, by happenstance, lobsterman Mark Leach of Harwich stopped in the office of the Fishermen's Alliance and solved the mystery.

"The ballyhoo," he said. Around here, and according to the Wise Fishermen's Encyclopedia (published by William H. Wise and Co. in the 1950s so not necessarily meant for wise fishermen only but still an amazing resource for everything fish-related), it's called the Balao or the Balao halfbeak.

Some say the Balao is a separate species from the ballyhoo and one can tell the difference from measuring the pectoral fin, but we are not that wise.

Leach has only seen them down South, around Florida, and the encyclopedia says the foot-long fish is an accidental visitor north of Chesapeake Bay – in the 1950s anyway. The same might have been said of black sea bass, now plentiful around here. Regardless, Martin was happy to have seen it.

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**On the Shore**

fishermen. Schooners were popular for fishing because their holds were large enough for storing both supplies and fish, and they were crafted to reach Georges Bank and the Grand Banks rather quickly, by measure of the 1800s.

*The story continues here ...*

Photo credit: Dennis Historical Society

## Over the Bar

Climbing the ladder to DC, so the herring can run here

We've talked a lot about herring over the past few months, and it sure looks like all that talk is paying off:



The New England Fishery Management Council is now calling for a 12-mile buffer zone off the coast from Montauk to Canada, to move factory-style mid-water trawlers away from inshore fishing areas. And just as important for our community, two more "boxes" east of the Cape would protect vital spawning grounds out to about 20 miles.

From the wheelhouse to the State House, people came together on this one. Those who understand how important ocean herring are to the whole offshore world and web – fishermen foremost – stepped up. Those who care about river herring and reviving freshwater runs, hoping to see them once again become a miraculous annual event, joined forces. Selectmen, town councilors, county commissioners, members of the assembly of delegates, state representatives and senators, all weighed in.

Given the strength of this coalition, and the power of the argument, maybe the real surprise is how long it took to get a buffer zone passed; we've been on this for more than a decade. And push to shove, a scientific assessment that the herring stocks are at historic lows, no doubt mainly because of pressure and small-fish mortality caused by trawlers, added urgency to the push to create protection now.

Sure, it would have been better to have done this before the stocks crashed, but better late than never. And now, hopefully we'll give the amazing ocean a chance to revive and rebuild, which in turn will give our small-boat fleet an opportunity to do the same. Our bet is that when the herring and other forage fish come back, so too will bigger fish that have always relied on them for a good meal. Many people are asking me if this is now a done deal, if the Council's overwhelming vote translates

This community thrives in large part because of a constellation of non-profit organizations and engaged businesses.



The Cape just received funding to help protect the

waters we all depend on. The Environmental Protection Agency awarded \$2.2 million in federal grants to a host of worthy organizations, including the *Association to Preserve Cape Cod*.

The association was awarded \$350,000 to partner with other groups and figure out how to reduce pollution from storm water runoff and fertilizer use affecting the Three Bays system in Barnstable, which includes West Bay, North Bay and Cotuit Bay. The *Pleasant Bay Alliance* also received \$250,000 for restoration of water quality in Pleasant Bay and close to \$400,000 went to the Cape Cod Commission to develop a water quality database and management system. By the way, last month the towns of Brewster, Orleans, Harwich and Chatham were the only government entities to receive a 2018 Environmental Merit Award from the EPA for their combined watershed permit.



Sean McNally, a recent graduate of the Marine Science and

Technology program at UMass Boston, will be on the Cape in the coming months diving into the world of shellfish as an intern for us here at the Fishermen's Alliance. He'll be reaching out to anyone who cares about shellfish – on the flats or on a plate – through a variety of methods (surveys, meetings, individual conversations). He will collect and analyze feedback, assist in drafting recommendations, develop educational content, and help advance the Massachusetts Shellfish Initiative. "My work with the MSI has taught me not only about the importance of solving industry and environmental issues but

directly into new rules and regulations. The answer, unfortunately, is not quite.

Here's how it works:

The Council, the last word as far as citizen participation in fisheries goes in the Northeast, recommends policy to federal officials; its opinion does not have the force of law. That means Council votes go to NOAA Fisheries for review and hopefully implementation.

NOAA looks hard at whether the Council's decisions are in line with federal fishing mandates and goals spelled out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the nation's driving legislation for fishery management. It also assesses whether there are unintended consequences, financial or otherwise, to Council votes. Proposals need to enter the bureaucracy in Washington, wending through the Department of Commerce and passing muster with the Office of Management and Budget. Sometimes this process can take months, even years.

So, to use a land metaphor, we're not out of the woods yet. But we have made a convincing case that these new buffer zones are not just reasonable but necessary, to protect both spawning areas and our community-based fishing fleet. And I believe that an emerging new generation of leadership at NOAA Fisheries recognizes the importance of a more holistic approach to fisheries management, thinking about the eco-system in its beauty and complexity rather than species by species. Herring is the poster child for the need for this kind of approach.

When might we get final review on the Council vote? Not before the beginning of the next fishing season, unfortunately. Which means it's likely we'll once again see mid-water trawlers, towing nets the size of football fields, plying waters just a few miles off the Cape's backshore just as river and ocean herring migrate our way come spring.

If I could wave a magic wand I would at least require every trawler, every trip, to carry observers to document the amount of dead fish they discard, which might limit the damage.

But I have no such wand. So instead I rely on public opinion, strong science, and officials who work hard to earn the public's trust. And I try to take the long view, celebrating true progress: We've taken a huge step forward; there are a few more to go.



*(John Pappalardo is the CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance)*

also the value in advancing public awareness into public action and involvement," McNally says.

The MSI was started and is led by the Fishermen's Alliance, the Massachusetts Aquaculture Association (MAA), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). It's working toward developing goals and guidance for how the state and municipalities should balance growing demands for shellfish resources.

If you see McNally please stop and say hello, even if it's to let him know if you prefer Wellfleet or Duxbury oysters – he is torn. [Contact him here.](#)



Sail into the Cahoon Museum of American Art's event

- Scallywags, Shanties and Scrimshaw - on Nov. 9, from 4:30 to 6 p.m.

[Click here](#) to register for a salty evening of sea-faring fun. Watch out for pirates as you listen to music, sample local seafood and spirits, hear a dramatic reading from Moby Dick and more. Get a jump start on your holiday shopping in the museum shop stocked with treasures and celebrate the bounty of the season.

It is in conjunction with the [museum's](#) exhibition Scrimshandering: Ralph Cahoon, Scrimshaw & Nantucket Whaling Heritage, sponsored by the [Cooperative Bank of Cape Cod.](#)

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## On the Hook

We do a lot of reading, searching through the wide world of fisheries, and often find intriguing pieces to share. In the old days, you might call this your clipping service.



Carlos Rafael, known in the media as the Codfather, has grabbed headlines after he was indicted for falsifying fish quotas (among

other charges), pled guilty and went to jail in 2017. [This article](#) details how last month NOAA expanded its civil prosecution and called for the revocation of 17 operator permits held by his captains, as well as increasing penalties from less than \$1 million to more than \$3 million.



Farmers Market aficionados partner up and bring a “one-stop fish shop” to Bow Market in Somerville. The idea involves an entrepreneur with a Cape presence. Here’s hoping it will spread to the peninsula. [Read more here.](#)



Since we are still pleased about the enormous effort the community put into protecting herring, we’re sharing this short radio piece. [Listen here.](#)

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