2026 Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Plan

Approved by the GRRSM Joint Board on January 20, 2026.

- The shellfish management plan is a working document that acts as a guide for action, policy and regulations concerning the sustainable management of the soft shell clam (Mya *arenaria) shellstock, razor clams, quahogs and oysters* resource in the flats and waters within the jurisdiction of the Georges River Regional Ordinance.
- Sustainable management means using the clam resource to meet our needs in the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- The Shellfish Management Committee should decide monthly if regulations and management actions shall be changed to best achieve the goals of the Clam Management Plan.
- Legal authority for the limitations, regulations, fees and other actions described within this Management Plan is provided by the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Ordinance and Maine statutes.

Section 1: Goals and Objectives:

1. We would like to see all interested clammers who apply for a commercial clam license take a genuine interest in the management plan, conservation and protection of a renewable clam resource.
2. We would like to see continued support of our tradition of clamming in this five-town program.
3. We want all flats in the five-town area classified "Approved" or open for clam harvesting.
4. Recreational clamming is an important community tradition that should be maintained by the program.
5. Clammers in the five-town program should partner with government in making clam management decisions through a process that is democratic, fair and open.
6. The Joint Board of Selectmen will make a monthly report from the shellfish warden available to the Shellfish Management Committee to be used to determine management actions and regulations.

Section 2: Regulations and Management Actions

A. Minimum Size of Clams:

Refer to section 15 in the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Ordinance. Compliance with Maine statute 6681 is required.

B. Time of Harvest:

1. Digging is prohibited from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, from April 1 to October 31. During this time there will be no use of artificial light for digging.
2. From November 1 to March 31, an artificial light may be used two-hours before sunrise and two-hours after sunset.
3. The commercial harvest of clams is prohibited on Sundays and Mondays, depending on license issued, from April 1 to October 31.

C. Amount of Clams Harvested:

1. The amount of clams possessed per tide by a non-student commercial license holder shall not exceed four bushels measured by volume.
2. The amount of clams possessed per tide by a student commercial license holder shall not exceed two bushels measured by volume.
3. The amount of clams possessed per tide by a recreational license holder shall not exceed one peck as measured by volume.

D. Clam License Types, Fees, and Numbers:

1. Types, Fees and Period of Issuance:

Each applicant may apply for only one license in the initial drawing. A student may **not** apply for a regular commercial license. Resident and non resident students who hold a current commercial clam license will be exempt. To hold an adult commercial license a person must be at least 18 years of age by June 1, 2026, or a member of the current graduating class**.**

(SEE SECTION E2, PAGE 3 IN REGARDS TO REQUIRED CONSERVATION TIME)

Commercial:

Resident Commercial Clam License:	$515.00
Resident Student Commercial Clam License	$157.50
Non - Resident Commercial Clam License:	$670.00
Non - Resident Student Commercial Clam License:	$235.00

Period of Issuance for all commercial licenses is June 1, 2026 to September 1, 2026 after which any unsold licenses shall be made available as defined by the Annual License Allocation Plan. All Commercial Licenses shall expire May 31st of the following year.

Recreational:

Resident Recreational Clam License:	$30 annually
Non-Resident Recreational Clam License:	$40 annually
Resident Recreational Clam License:	$10 daily
Non-Resident Recreational Clam License:	$20 daily

The Resident Recreational/Non Resident Recreational license is free to applicants 65 years and older and to applicants 12 years and younger.

All Annual Recreational Shellfish Licenses shall expire one (1) year from date of issue. Daily Recreational Shellfish Licenses are valid only on the date of issue.

* All clams harvested under recreational license shall be for personal use only.

2. Numbers of Licenses to be issued in 2026:

A maximum of 108 commercial licenses will be issued in 2026.
(77 Resident, 9 Nonresident, 20 Resident Student, 2 Nonresident Student)

There will be no limits on the number of recreational licenses issued in 2026.

The exact number of commercial licenses issued will be determined by THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026.

These maximum numbers of commercial licenses to be issued are based on an assessment of the clam populations on each flat within the five-town regional clam management area. (*See section 3 - c*)

E. Conservation Time:

1. Conservation events are not guaranteed a minimum amount of hours.

2. Three (3) hours of conservation time is mandatory, the remaining seven (7) hours can be purchased for a total of ten (10) hours of conservation time. **Conservation time must be completed by October 31, 2025 in order for a license applicant to be eligible for a priority drawing for a 2026-2027** non student commercial shellfish license. Student commercial license holders will be exempt from doing conservation time. Resident and non resident commercial license holders who are 70 years and older will not be required to do conservation time, effective for the 2026-2027 license year. Committee members who have accumulated a total of 10 years of service on the committee will be exempt from doing conservation time.

Applicants for a commercial shellfish harvesters license may elect to perform up to 7 hours of shellfish conservation work in exchange for a reduction in the license fee. The fee reduction cannot total more than $140.00 at the rate of $20.00 per hour. Work performed shall be approved by the GRSC. This must be completed by October 31, 2025 to be eligible for the reduction.

In order to receive a reduction in license fee, conservation hours must be completed between **November 1, 2024 and October 31, 2025**. Resident and non-resident commercial license holders who are 70 years and older will receive a ten hour ($200) reduction from their license fee. Committee members who have accumulated a total of 10 years of active service on the committee will receive a ten hour ($200) reduction from their license fee. Committee members are exempt from having to do conservation time.

3. Excess Conservation Time cannot be carried forward. Non-current license holders who have completed 3 hours or more or bought up to 7 hours of conservation time in any one conservation year will have their hours carried over each year until they are awarded a commercial license. A properly completed license application must be submitted by the application deadline date, effective for the 2026-2027 license year.

4. Activities must be approved by the Shellfish Committee and time certified by the Conservation Time Coordinator.

5. October 31, 2026, is the cutoff date for Conservation Time for 2027-2028 licenses. The Conservation Time Coordinator shall submit a report of activities and a list of individuals and their conservation time to the Joint Board by December 1, 2026.

6. Certifiable Activities List:

- Water sampling with GRTA supervision
- Shoreline survey with DMR or GRTA supervision
- Service on Shellfish Committee or Joint Board of Selectmen
- Fundraising events
- Water measuring and testing
- Conservation Hours Coordinator
- Backup sign changer for the Shellfish Warden
- Backup rain gauge monitor for the Shellfish Warden
- Shoreline cleanup
- Green Crab
- Spat boxes
- Other activities as approved by the Shellfish Committee

F. Allocation of Clam Licenses:

Refer to the Annual License Allocation Procedure Plan for the 2026 Drawing, available from the participating town offices or town clerks, or the shellfish warden.

Section 3: Conservation Activities

A. Re-seeding:

1. Purpose:

a. The harvest of legal size clams on selected flats should be increased by transferring seed clams to those flats with low populations.

b. The effectiveness of each reseeding action should be evaluated and reported to the Shellfish Management Committee and the Joint Board in writing.

c. Surveys of clam populations should be done in some way to determine which flats to seed and to determine when harvest should be allowed on specific flats.

d. A schedule of events with times and dates and areas selected for receiving seed clams as well as areas serving as the source of the seed clams shall be posted all town offices, on the bulletin board at the Thomaston Landing, and on the Georges River Shellfish Facebook page.

B. Opening and Closing of Flats:

1. Purpose:

a. Flats may be opened or closed for clamming based on the need to provide clamming opportunities within this management plan.

b. Conservation areas will be established to enhance and protect clam populations on specific flats.

c. Openings and closings to harvest will be timed and selected to spread harvesting effort throughout the management area and avoid concentrating effort.

d. Public notice of opening and closing of flats will be done as described under Re-seeding (d.) above, with date of opening or closing also to include posting at that specific area.

e. If the conditional area of the St. George River is closed more than thirty (30) days total, beginning June 1st the commercial harvest of clams will not be prohibited on Sundays or Mondays to March 31 of the following year.

C. Annual Estimate of the Clam Population on all flats within the jurisdiction of the Ordinance and Plan

The Shellfish Management Committee will present "a status of the resource" report to the Joint Board by December 30, 2026.

Section 4: Water Quality Indicators:

1. Purpose:

A healthy clam fishery depends on open or "Approved" classification flats on as much of the clam flat acreage within the five-town clam management area as possible.

To achieve the goal of getting all flats approved for safe harvest by the DMR, the Shellfish Management Committee shall establish by December 30, 2026, the priority water quality areas for work during the coming year.

Work to get these flats "Approved" will be coordinated with the DMR, the Georges River Tidewater Association and municipal officials.

A. Priority Areas for 2026:

1. Long Cove
2. Wiley's Cove
3. Maple Juice – Post Office
4. Keag River
5. Oyster River
6. Mill Creek

B. The Shellfish Management Committee will present a report on water quality issues to the Joint Board by December 30, 2026 - including:

1. The annual report from DMR, if available
2. The annual "State of the River" review by GRTA, if available

Section 5. Changes in the Annual Clam Management Plan:

1. Initiation:

A proposal for a change to this management plan may be initiated by the following:

a. A recommendation of the Shellfish Management Committee
b. A recommendation of the Joint Board of Selectmen

2. Municipal Review:

a. Any proposal for a change to this management plan shall be made in writing to the Shellfish Management Committee or to the Joint Board of Selectmen, stating the specific changes requested. Requests presented to the Joint Board shall be reviewed by the Shellfish Management Committee for a recommendation to the Joint Board.

b. Within thirty (30) days of receiving the committee's recommendation, the Joint Board will vote on the proposed changes.

3. Adoption:

If a recommendation to change the Management Plan is adopted by the Joint Board, the proposed change shall be submitted to the Department of Marine Resources (DMR) for approval.

4. Public Notice:

Upon approval by the DMR, notice of the changes shall be posted and advertised by the Joint Board in a newspaper of general circulation within the participating towns. Sufficient detail about the proposed changes shall be described in the published public notice. If the changes are extensive, a brief summary of the changes together with an indication that a full text is available from each town clerk shall be adequate notice. Notice will be posted as described in Section 3 (1) (d) of this Plan.

This 2026 GRRSM Management Plan is approved by the Georges River Regional Shellfish Management Organization Joint Board on this date:

Jan. 20, 2026

Daniel Staples, Cushing, Chairman

Wayne Luce, Warren, Vice Chair

Sue Snow, South Thomaston

Sandy Moore, Thomaston

Tammy Willey, St. George

Attest:

Town Clerk, Warren