



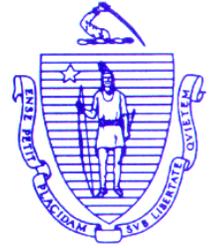
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**January 17, 2012**

### **Marine Fisheries Advisory**

## **SHELLFISH PLANTING GUIDELINES RELEASED**

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The Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) has published a new guidance document to help the public understand the various state and federal laws, regulations, and policies concerning shellfish planting. This effort is designed to help both project proponents and permitting agencies who may be involved in shellfish planting projects in coastal waters.

Shellfish planting is conducted to enhance natural shellfish resources to maintain commercial and recreational fisheries, restore historic populations, mitigate for adversely impacted resources, commercially produce shellfish by private aquaculture, or for ecological services.

There is increasing interest in planting shellfish to improve water quality in degraded coastal water bodies within the Commonwealth. *Marine Fisheries* is interested in balancing the interest in shellfish restoration with the important goals of safeguarding human health, protecting wild shellfish stocks, enabling opportunities for commercial and recreational shellfishing, and fostering development of shellfish aquaculture in Massachusetts.

*Marine Fisheries*, with the assistance of The Nature Conservancy, held five Public Listening Sessions during September 2011 to solicit public input regarding draft guidelines which were circulated to stakeholders. The entire public process was funded by a grant from The Massachusetts Bays Program. As a result of this public process, *Marine Fisheries* developed shellfish planting guidelines based on six overarching principles that describe allowable practices, statutory and regulatory authority, permit requirements, and types of available permits.

These guidelines were crafted to clarify and enumerate considerations for review of shellfish planting projects to benefit project applicants, as well as local, state, and federal resource and permitting agencies. The Shellfish Planting Guidelines are available on the *Marine Fisheries* website: [http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf/programsandprojects/shellplant\\_guide.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf/programsandprojects/shellplant_guide.htm).