

River Herring Network Annual Meeting

October 18, 2018

Breakout Discussion Topic: Recruitment of Herring Wardens/Committee Members

Background: Harvest of river herring has been under a moratorium since 2006 and for some towns this has meant a loss of revenue, and a loss of interest by elected officials in town river herring management needs. Town herring wardens and town herring committee members no longer manage harvest as they once did, but they still have many responsibilities and most need helpers to assist them with run maintenance. The role of town herring warden has existed since colonial times and herring wardens gather a tremendous amount of river specific knowledge over the years they observe the run. What are we all doing to ensure that this information is shared and passed on? What are we all doing to ensure that the town position survives or evolves so that river herring populations continue to have local stewards?

Goals for the Day:

- Check in – do we as a group need to focus on recruitment of people to committees and deputy positions?
- Create a list of positive recruitment stories that others can use
- Create a list of challenges to recruiting new people
- Determine how widespread the challenges are – is it just one river or watershed – or are there problems across many towns and watersheds?
- Brainstorm one or two things everyone can do between now and next year

Group #1

Facilitator: Abigail Archer

Note taker: Grace Simpkins

Question #1 Who first got you interested in river herring and river herring management? (Go around the room – people can pass if they don't want to talk)

Sentences with “/” splitting the thoughts are comments by the same person.

Chris Neil from CRT took her to river. Enthusiastic herring warden took people to the field. Researching a book/traveling around. Interest in restoring rivers brought her to the herring/started with argument with cranberry bog owner spraying pesticides in backyard. Saw a vibrant herring run and asked questions. DMF/involved in conservation/got into open space protection/ultimately the dams/Jones river. 60 years ago lived in Pembroke and school was marched to the herring run/took lunch to the herring run/joined Middleboro conservation group and thought they weren't doing enough for the river. Always loved fishing and herring are a vital part/one day went to a meeting/after the harvesting was stopped/life cycle is interesting/they are food chain. School advisor motivated her to incorporate it in her master's. As marine biologist their role in the food web was interesting. As a boy scout he was used as a resource on herring project/herring commission. He visited the Canal, lay on the banks of the Canal and saw herring swim up the Canal and swim in the

Canal (this as an adult). Commuting to work and saw fish trying to get up a dam/called watershed association to ask and they got him hooked/talked to DMF. Friend who did canoeing and kayaking on Mystic Lakes told him they were putting a dam in and they discussed putting a fish ladder in it. Always interested in rivers but lived inland/moved to coastal MA and heard a report on the herring run/went/saw herring run and seagulls eating them/town has run of herring/was interested.

Interested in environmental internships and pointed toward Jones River Group and from interest in how ecosystems work led to herring love. 1980's grad student low on resources and caught herring in the Jones River in late Feb for food and caught lots/asked to start herring run stewardship group as adult as part of job. Worked for municipality/told to do it/environment is part of who he is/as a youngster in Plymouth went to see the run. Grew up in Plymouth/ingrained in culture/every spring they go to herring run at grist mill. High school volunteer counting the fish. Canoe shop conversation about taking down dams and having a long canoe ride/led to conversation about herring. Went to herring runs as a child with parents.

The experiences shared above can be grouped into the following categories:

People who introduced us to river herring work

Boy Scout leader
Academic Advisors
Teachers
Family members
Respected colleagues and/or peers
The herring warden at the time

Experiences and/or events that introduced us to river herring work

Direct harvest experience
Hunger
Recreational fishing experience
Visual observation – seeing river herring migration as a kid and as an adult
Participation in groups such as watershed associations and Trout Unlimited
Town government experience
Job and internship opportunities
Voluntold
A conservation need in your own backyard
Research project
Field trips
River recreation

Reading about restoration efforts in newspaper

Citizen science opportunities

The purpose of gathering all the information above is to determine ways to recruit. The above people and experiences successfully recruited us to river herring management & monitoring & research work. How can we duplicate these experiences and interactions for people in our social and work circles?

Question #2 What motivated you to volunteer, or be willing to be appointed, or to apply for the job? (Go around the group)

We did not directly answer this question because some of this info was addressed in answering question #1

Question #3 Show of Hands – if you decide to retire, is there a person who would take your place?

Yes = 6, No = Current vacancies in herring groups now. We are replaceable but we can't recruit people. People were more willing to get involved when they could catch river herring.

Question #4 For those of you who have a successor, how did they get involved? Did you specifically recruit or did it happen organically?

- In our town, the interest in Coonamessett and herring run is high so there should be people to replace me.
- Find anybody with a tiny bit of interest in any aspect then grab them and take them to the river.
- Get as many people as possible interested in ownership. Promote ownership of projects. Some are interested in birds, insects, plants, fish so you have to hook everyone with their specific interests. Be open to broader interests than just herring.
- Cute kid pictures at the river to catch people's attention
- Multifaceted approach. At CRT herring gets people, brook trout brings in people, land is owned by the town so you have folks using the greenway.
- Recruitment – ours is tucked in woods/no viewpoint so she goes to elementary school/reads herring book/encourage parents to take kids to count. Got regional high school environmental science class to use it as their lab/Water quality/counts/etc.
- Andover – hired someone as his deputy and drags him everywhere.
- Be open to various ideas

Question #5 What challenges have you experienced in getting people involved with herring run management?

- Solicited counters (lots), some were with parents, then did followups to see if they wanted to be appointed as observers, no one wanted an official title/they just wanted to volunteer as counter/tried to thank with cook out and no one went.
- Difficult to recruit volunteers to count, sent e-mail to 100 people, 2 workshops over 2 weekends 40 people came, 10 counters resulted.
- Success in keeping volunteers relies on having a year-round group that exists in the river for other reasons and is active all year not just herring counting/even if neighborhood association/see most success in getting counting volunteers if they are in some other group since they already have social contacts.
- Recently celebrated 10 years in group and got Julian Cyr to volunteer/having a high profile volunteer helped get the word out.
- Herring run occurs during the same time as MCAS testing so it's hard to get kids out to the field at that time of year. Need to target certain grades and tie activities to curriculum. Going through principal did not work but go after individual teachers. Go to teachers and ask them what concepts you want the kids to learn. Look up curriculum standards and tell the teachers how you tie into the curriculum standards. You may be able to link to math, science, or other topics.
- Contagion – one teacher took what they had and ran with it. Next year 4 other classes participated that saw what she did and what could be done.
- Resources are needed to get kids to the river – funding for buses
- Sometimes funding is there though and teachers do not/cannot participate for other reasons
- In Middleboro-Lakeville the charter for the Fisheries Commission restricts ability to do outreach
- It's difficult to reach the river

Question #6 Do you get the support you need (time, \$, acknowledgement, staff help) from your town to carry out run management?

We did not get to address this question – we ran out of time

Question #7 What can we do to address the issues that we've discussed – either individually or as a group?

- Find the teacher that was interested or find someone with kids so can go into classrooms.
- One person is on the conservation commission – paid to send 2nd grade teachers to Manomet observatory – gave them coloring pages/activities/etc. They said they could

not take kids to the field due to lack of funds. He fundraised enough money to pay for buses. Then he was told he could not take kids to the field.

- Can we use River Herring Network website for storage of materials/study guides/presentations.
- Importance of having municipal staff and herring wardens. Need town folks to oversee herring run and natural resources.
- Need fisheries or herring or alewife committees in place- committee of citizens to lobby town manager and other town officials for fish protection and stewardship. Many towns have herring wardens that can do it themselves but having a town alewife committee to back them up is critical.
- Workshop on volunteer recruitment would be welcome.
- With volunteers – some wardens have charter which restricts what they can do. Goal is to provide passage for the herring. It does not invite people to volunteer.
- Can you have volunteer observers come to this meeting next time so they are interested and keep coming back.
- CRT puts on annual meeting with Brad Chase, Steve Hurley, etc. that is open to anyone in town and they invite their volunteers.
- Wellfleet kicks off count with event/picks up new people.
- You don't need 100 volunteers. Need 1-5 fanatics with follow through. Most counters come and count and we don't see them. They do their job and are really important.
- Have a range of things to do with small commitments to bigger things.
- Run estimates with 10 volunteers to count are the bare minimum. Some groups have 40-90 counters with lower error bars. 10 is the minimum but aim for much more. Set a high bar.
- Focus on getting a few really good volunteers
- Person to person communication really works
- For school outreach – find someone in your group who has kids or grandkids. Ask if you can visit their classroom
- Fundraiser for buses to get kids to the river and see fish
- Work with homeschool students, Montessori or Waldorf schools – they have more flexibility in their day
- Figure out how your information crosses with the curriculum standards
- Usually more success contacting individual teachers rather than principals
- Take an Arts approach with school visits – partner with an art teacher

- When you find one teacher who is excited to have a lesson about river herring – ask him/her to coordinate lessons for the whole grade
- Make real river herring data accessible to teachers

Group#2

Facilitator: Brad Chase

Note taker: Michelle Staudinger

Question #1 Who first got you interested in river herring and river herring management? (Go around the room – people can pass if they don't want to talk)

- Family (tradition)
- Reformed poachers
- Excitement of observing migration dynamics

Question #2 What motivated you to volunteer, or be willing to be appointed, or to apply for the job? (Go around the group)

- Fishermen, love of being on the water
- Restoration as a “hook”
- Citizen science program to bring in funding for river herring and other things
- Mass General Laws Chapter 130 Section 94
- Community/culture around runs
- to re-open harvest

Question #3 Show of Hands – if you decide to retire, is there a person who would take your place?
Edgartown, Eastham and Falmouth have back up staff

Question #4 For those of you who have a successor, how did they get involved? Did you specifically recruit or did it happen organically?

- Engage Board of Selectmen
- Existing wardens can deputize
- Americorps
- Increase awareness and education of the ecosystem benefits of having river herring

Question #5 What challenges have you experienced in getting people involved with herring run management?

- South East Mass declines, lack of open harvest
- How do we find “super” volunteers?
- Poor pay for wardens
- Funding for run maintenance
- Communication by DMF

Question #6 Do you get the support you need (time, \$, acknowledgement, staff help) from your town to carry out run management?

- Poor pay
- Town involvement/knowledge
- Public Works

Question #7 What can we do to address the issues that we’ve discussed – either individually or as a group?

- Pair with gardeners clubs – pair a herring with a corn plant
- Pair with striper fishermen and small mouth bass fishermen and people who fish for other predators in both saltwater and freshwater systems
- Work with tree wardens
- Work with tribes in our area
- Work with other citizen science and educational organizations and networks
- Regionalization of program
- Better communication by DMF
- 2018 County budget line item – water quality for shared watershed testing
- River Herring festivals for fundraising support, outreach and education and recruitment
- Engage Town Boards of Selectmen – tell them we want fish!
- Show elected officials the peak of the run!
- Tag onto other events – Celebrate our Waters in Orleans and International Migratory Fish Day



