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October 2016 Report

Sengekontacket Pond recreational bay scallop season was opened on October 8th. The first day most everyone did well. After that the catches went down. There were some comments about the scallops though. We heard that there were more slipper shells and jungle shells growing on the scallop shells, weak hinges and the meats were a little soft. The fouling we can't do anything about. The weak hinges are seen from time to time. Weak hinges have not been studied in depth but there is an association with bacteria. The soft meats may partially be due to that fact that the water is still warm. Commercial scalloping started in Sengekontacket Pond on October 17th. Scalloping in Lagoon Pond will open for recreational scalloping on October 29 and commercial October 31st. There have been a few people out to take advantage of harvesting oysters.

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries closed all waters south of Cape Cod to shellfishing on October 10th due to concentrated populations of a diatom known as *Pseudonitzschia* and confirming an elevated toxicity level in quahogs samples from Vineyard Sound. This is a hazardous alga and can cause Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning (ASP). The toxin is domoic acid and becomes concentrated in the gut of shellfish. Initial symptoms are upset stomach with vomiting, headaches that can progress to seizures and loss of short term memory. This diatom is common in our waters but usually only in very low numbers. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries does allow fishing for bay scallops on the assumption that people only eat the muscle and not the gut.

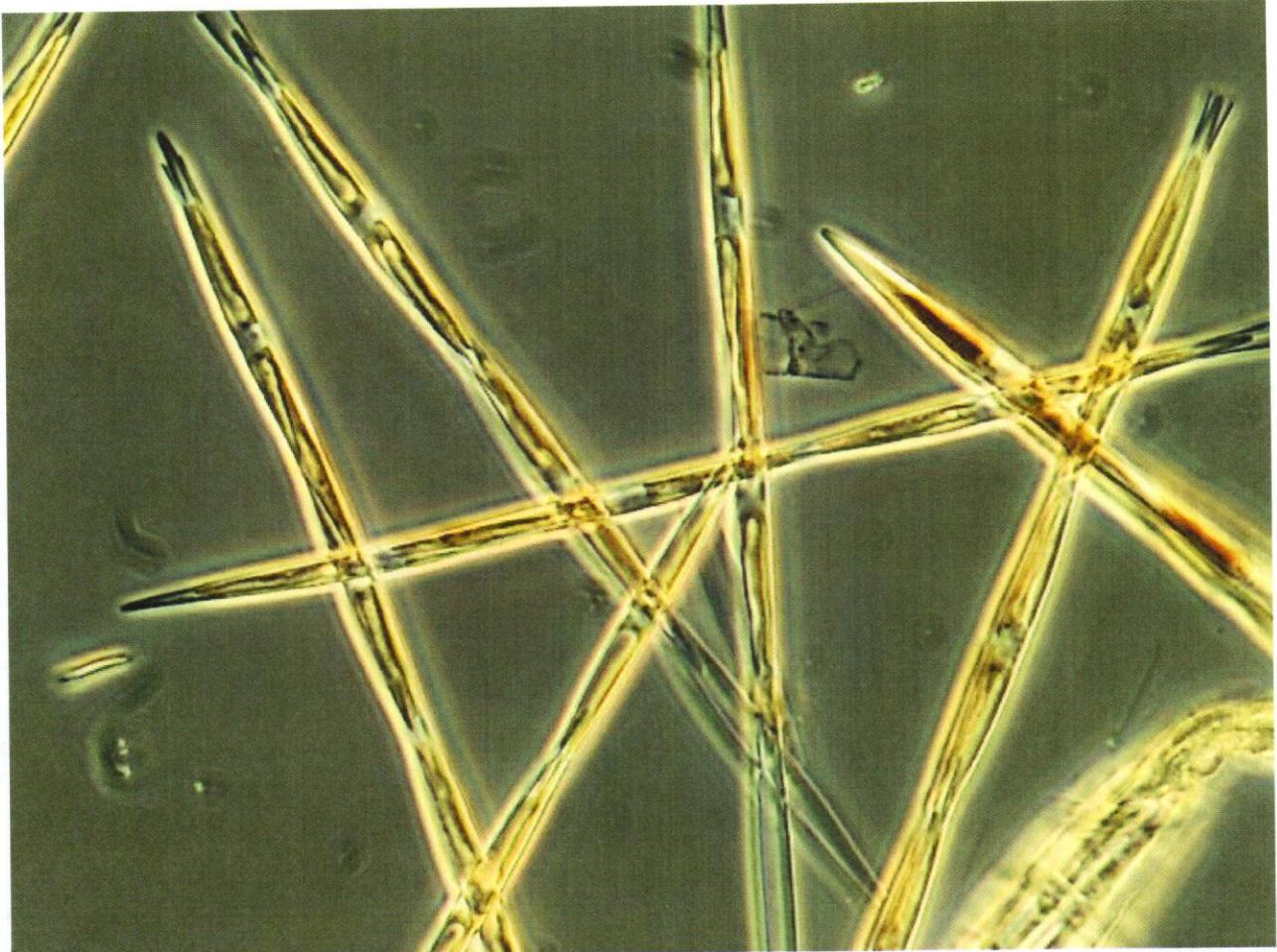
Coincidentally we also received more than two inches of rain that also closed Sengekontacket Pond but scallops are also exempt from this closure status.

We have brought all the nursery rafts in. Quahogs seed was planted into Sengekontacket Pond, Lagoon Pond and the harbor. There are still 3 lines of scallop bags in Lagoon Pond from the last scallop spawn at the Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group and are still quite small. There are still oyster seed cages to move to deeper water to over winter and to pull the oyster upweller out for the winter.

I have been requested to adopt more of a uniform appearance for the department. To that end we have ordered dressier shirts with the town seal embroidered on the left chest.

This past summer we allowed both Oak Bluffs tackle shops (Dick's Bait and Tackle and Keep it Reel) to sell non-resident shellfish licenses. A total of 36 one week licenses and 1 two week license were sold. This is up dramatically from last year. Both shops want to sell them again next summer as they did well on selling associated gear.

Respectfully submitted



The diatom *Pseudo-nitzschia* that causes Amnesic Shellfish Poisoning in humans
They can be found singly or in chains as in this photograph