



Rhode Island
Department of Environmental Management

DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

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February 2, 2018

David Beutel
Aquaculture Coordinator
Coastal Resources Management Council
4808 Tower Hill Road
Wakefield, RI 02879

Re: Perry Raso Lease Application # 2017-12-086

Dear Mr. Beutel:

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (Department), through the Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), has received and reviewed the application submitted by Perry Raso for a proposed 2.98-acre aquaculture lease in Potter Pond for cultivating eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) and bay scallops (*Argopecten irradians*) using floating cages, lantern nets, and suspended longlines with spat bags.

The DMF and DFW believe that the adverse impacts to marine fisheries and wildlife and their habitat from this prospective site would be minimal. Based on historical survey data demonstrating a large abundance of soft-shell clams (*Mya arenaria*) in Seger Cove (Erkan and Gibson 2005), DMF staff initially had concerns regarding possible impacts to soft-shell clam habitat within the lease area. Staff conducted a soft-shell clam and quahog survey on November 2, 2017 using both a bull rake and a suction device. No soft-shell clams and very few quahogs (<1 quahog/m²) were caught. Additionally, there is no submerged aquatic vegetation within or near the proposed lease area at present, or in historical data (Figure 1). As such, the DFW and DMF do not have objections to this application on the basis of impacts to benthic habitats utilized by shellfish and/or finfish.

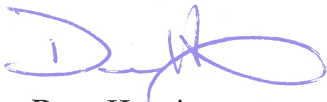
The DFW notes that the applicant has included time of day work restrictions of between the hours of 9 AM and 3 PM for the period November 15 - March 15 annually to reduce interference with migratory waterfowl that use Seger cove as a roost site during winter. The DFW proposed these dates and times during the preliminary determination meeting and appreciates the applicant's incorporation of this request into the application submitted for public notice. The DFW's acceptance of these hours and dates is specific to this location as it is primarily used as a roost site and not a feeding area for migratory waterfowl.

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While DMF staff do not have any data indicating recreational fishing is present within the proposed lease area, staff acknowledge that this area may be heavily utilized for recreational finfishing and anticipate that there may be public opposition to the proposed location. Shellfishing activity regularly occurs north of the proposed site based on information collected as part of the Shellfish Management Plan (Shellfish Management Plan Team 2014; see Figure 1), but this data source does not indicate regular activity within the proposed site. The proposed lease area itself is over 25 feet from the shoreline (allowing for recreational clamming inshore) and is situated in 5.5 feet of water (at mean low water) above a mud and gravel substrate. Therefore, the site is unlikely to support significant recreational clamming activity. Hence, the DFW and DMF do not have objections to this application.

The Department's acceptance of the current proposal is specific to the location and specifications outlined in the application.

Sincerely,



Dean Hoxsie,
Acting Associate Director for Natural Resources