

Southampton Town Trustees Sign Off On Scallop Study



PHOTO GALLERY

UPDATED Oct 21, 2015 12:15 PM

By [Greg Wehner](#)

The Southampton Town Trustees agreed Monday to survey the adult scallop population in a series of waterways that include the Scallop Pond Preserve and West Neck Creek, situated between Shinnecock Hills and North Sea, the first step in what could eventually lead to the reopening of the area to mechanical dredging.

A once-thriving fishery, local bay scallops were depleted in the mid-1980s by the emergence of brown tides, and multiple attempts have been made over the years to get their numbers back up.

The current number of adult scallops in the area—dubbed the West Neck Complex—is unknown, prompting the need for the survey, according to the Town Trustees. Once it is completed, the Trustees will contact the State Department of Environmental Conservation to determine if the area can be opened to mechanical dredges.

According to Southampton Town Trustee President Ed Warner Jr., the last time the area was open to such dredging was 2013. Currently, baymen are allowed only to rake, snorkel or use “look boxes,” the latter typically being wooden boxes with glass bottoms, to catch scallops.

Baymen have reported that the population of adult bay scallops in portions of the West Neck Complex could be dense enough to support a dredge fishery. At the same time, it has been suggested that the number of scallops in these areas are still too low to allow such a harvesting method.

“What [the Trustees] want to do is a population survey. The survey allows them to know the size distribution,” said Gregg Rivara, an aquaculture specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension who addressed the board during Monday’s meeting. “Scallops have to be two and a quarter inches in size, have a two-year life span and typically only spawn once during their life.”

With the scalloping season quickly approaching—it opens on Monday, November 2—Mr. Warner said he wants the survey, which should take only a day to complete, to be finished by mid-November. Trustees said it will take some time for the scientists to submit a written report of their findings. The Trustees have agreed to pay for the \$2,850 study out of their own funds; they have not yet determined who will complete the examination.

"All of the scallops in the Peconic were brought in after 1985," explained Mr. Warner, pointing to a devastating brown tide that nearly wiped out the East End's scalloping industry.

The current plan is to complete dredge tows at randomly selected locations within the West Neck complex. During such a tow, the dredge—a device that typically has a metal mouth and a collection net—is dragged across the seafloor and collects scallops. The relative density at each location will be estimated from the number of adult scallops that are collected during each pass.

Charter boat captain Don Law, who lives in Hampton Bays and is running for Town Trustee next month, said the main concern is that widespread harvesting could deplete the numbers of juvenile scallops, those that are still growing and have not spawned yet. Scallops typically spawn when they are one year old and they go through that reproduction process only once, according to Mr. Rivara.

If a scalloper is getting only one or two legal-size scallops per dredge, and everything else is a "bug"—a baby scallop that is illegal to harvest because of its size—he must move to another location. The size of a scallop is determined by its growth ring, and Mr. Law explained that it is a fine line to determine which scallops are legal because some have a growth ring and some do not.

Many efforts, such as transporting scallops from other locations and aquaculture, have taken place to replenish the East End's once-thriving scallop population.

A promotional banner for a book signing event. On the left, the book cover for 'HEIRLOOM HARVEST' by Amy Goldman is shown. The text on the right reads: 'Amy Goldman: Come meet Amy and talk h SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH - 2-4PM - AT M Afterwards enjoy a complimentary organic, non-gmo fall harv'. The background is green with a pattern of small white dots.

27EAST.COM QUICK LINKS

Hamptons News

- [Southampton News](#)
- [East Hampton News](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Police Report](#)

Hamptons Real Estate

- [Property Sales](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Market Trends](#)

Hamptons Classified

- [Help Wanted](#)
- [Yard Sales](#)

A banner for reading e-papers. It features a small image of a newspaper cover on the left. The text reads: 'Read our e-Papers The Southampton Press The East Hampton Press Mobile - Tablet - Desktop'. The background is dark blue.

(View a sample issue)