

Island Ad-Vantages

THE VIEW FROM ATLANTIC AVENUE

October 17, 2019 – There used to be blue mussel beds in several of the coves on Deer Isle, but they are gone. What happened to them? This is apparently happening in several parts of the state. Blue mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) growing in the wild, attach to hard surfaces and can often form “beds” several inches thick as they cluster and attach to one another. The threads used for attachment (beards), or byssal threads, allow them to attach after they settle out of the water column. When grown in aquaculture, the baby mussels (spat) that are floating in the water column attach to ropes and are then manipulated so they continue to grow on the ropes until harvest in about 2 years. This allows them access to plenty of phytoplankton as their food source and growers can manage growth by adjusting density. It seems that there are plenty of wild mussel spat in the water column and mariners see them attached to mooring lines, docks and piers. So why are they not settling into the coves? There are several theories, including possible physiological effects of changes in the pH of the ocean water and the sediment, or ocean acidification. This may affect how the byssal threads work. Some believe that many of the intertidal mussel beds may have been overharvested by intertidal dragging and the resulting sediment plume could have changed the nature of the bottom so that it is no longer conducive to mussel settlement or attachment. Predation by the invasive European Green Crab is also a likely possibility, as they are ravenous eaters, and are having severe impact on many intertidal shellfish species including steamer clams.

Do you have a question about our fisheries? Send it to info@coastalfisheries.org or call 367-2708. Visit us online at www.coastalfisheries.org.

FISHERIES LOG

Prices to Harvesters in Stonington

Lobsters (shedder select): \$4.75/lb.

Clams: Not available

Bait (herring): \$82/bu.

Fuel (diesel): \$2.55/gal.

Oceanographic Buoy I-01*

44°6'10"N 68°6'44"W - Frenchboro

Sea surface temperature: 53°F

SST - Long term average: 52°F

Bottom temperature: 53°F

BT - Long term average: 51°F

DISCLAIMER: figures were collected Monday, October 15 | *SOURCE: www.neracoos.org