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# The Martha's Vineyard TIMES

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**July 1 - July 7, 2004 Edition**  
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## Aquinnah cuts rock shellfish group budget July 1, 2004

By Ezra Blair

In the wake of last week's Aquinnah annual town meeting finale, the Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group faces a budget shortfall.

If Aquinnah voters do not approve a Proposition 2.5 override next month to restore money to several budget line items which were cut in the fiscal year 2005 town budget, the Island shellfish group could lose nearly 10 percent of its funding.

"We're looking at a pretty big part of our budget disappearing. If that money isn't made available we will probably be able to make it through this season, but we're going to have a real crisis next year," Rick Karney, the shellfish group's director, said this week.

Last week Aquinnah voters approved a balanced operating budget that includes chopping \$20,000 out of the \$23,575 shellfish group assessment.

Aquinnah's decision to cut the funding from the shellfish group was one of many decisions that town leaders made to close a \$260,000 budget gap left when voters failed to approve a Prop 2.5 override earlier this month.

Town leaders said they plan to go back to the voters again with a Prop 2.5 override request sometime in mid-July. The expectation is that some of the cuts needed to balance the budget, including those to the shellfish group, could then be restored.

Mr. Karney said the cuts come during an already difficult year. On top of losing money from Aquinnah, the shellfish group also lost a \$25,000 grant for fiscal year 2005.

"We have been able to secure about \$25,000 in state aid in the past, but that money was denied this year. Add that to the loss from Aquinnah and you're talking about a big part of our budget," he said.

Approximately 67 percent of the shellfish group's budget comes from annual assessments to the six Island towns. For fiscal year 2005, the group's budget is \$208,410, with \$141,450 of that being paid by the towns.

Mr. Karney said the shellfish group would meet soon to discuss how to move forward without Aquinnah's participation. He said they would consider closing operations earlier this year and assessing the other five towns more money next year.

The 2005 assessment represented a 2.4 percent increase over last year's budget. Mr. Karney said that limiting the burden on the towns was a top concern.

"We have tried very hard to keep assessments within a 2.5 percent increase.



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We have skyrocketing insurance prices and other costs, and just by holding our increase to 2.5 we are basically going into deficit. Now to lose an entire town we are certainly going to have a real problem," he said.

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