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Tribe Completes Cleanup of Drifting Oyster Bags

The cleanup of some 260 oyster bags that have been floating in Menemsha Pond for several months was completed this week by the natural resources department of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

Work crews logged 57 hours over six days to complete the cleanup project on both the Aquinnah and Chilmark sides of the pond, tribal administrator Tobias Vanderhoop said yesterday.

“The bags have been assembled in the aquaculture zone and are being inventoried and then returned to the lines,” Mr. Vanderhoop said.

The aquaculture zone is inside Menemsha Pond between Red Beach and Herring Pond.

He estimated that between 500 and 600 bags now exist, including the 260 bags that broke loose over the winter and were in the pond or had washed ashore. Work on the five-year aquaculture project was suspended last fall.

Contents of the 260 recovered bags are being examined and inventoried before being resuspended on lines in the aquaculture zone, Mr. Vanderhoop said. Neither he nor Bret Stearns, natural resources director, had an estimate of the health of recovered oysters but both said yesterday they were heartened by the condition of the shellfish examined to date.

“We are continuing to monitor the pond and if additional bags are spotted, another crew will be dispatched,” Mr. Vanderhoop said. He said employees from several departments aided in the cleanup.

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