

## NEWS FROM MORGAN BAY

Starting in late Spring and running through Fall, 2026, Morgan Bay will be hosting a shellfish study directed by Dr. Brian Beal, Professor of Marine Ecology & Director of the Marine Science Field Station at the University of Maine at Machias. In 2024, Brian received a grant to study factors that might be contributing to the significant drop in the population of soft-shell clams on the Maine coast. This study looks at the question of whether the presence of other filter feeding bivalves like oysters, mussels, and quahogs impacts the survival and growth of soft-shell clam larvae.

Specifically, Dr. Beal and his team want to know if other bivalves are filtering significant numbers of soft-shell clam larvae out of the water column before they can settle to the bottom and attach. To answer this question, in April the team will deploy 220 “Beal boxes” over an area of 75 ft × 150 ft at the head of Morgan Bay. Each “Beal box” is a 1 ft × 2 ft shallow frame made of wood and mesh that is filled with sediment and anchored into the mudflat. These frames will be recovered in the Fall to count the number of soft-shell clam spat that have settled in each box over the summer.

Dr. Beal is conducting this study at three locations along the Maine coast (Surry, Brunswick and Freeport); the selection of Morgan Bay as a study site is supported by the Surry Conservation Commission and the Surry Shellfish Committee. This study is also supported by the Department of Marine Resources and has been approved by the Army Corps of Engineers. All the data from the study will be shared when the project is complete.

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