Commercial: Restore oyster research funds

By JEAN JONES
Staff Writer

COMMERCIAL TWP. — The township committee adopted a resolution Thursday requesting Gov. Christie Whitman to restore and dedicate funds for oyster research.

“She has cut money for most marine fisheries research and revitalization efforts of the oyster industry,” said Committeeman Barney Hollinger. “We would like to know why she hasn’t responded to any of our letters since April.

The resolution states that Whitman has vetoed funding for oyster research in Delaware Bay by denying funds to the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratories and also funding for the revitalization of oyster seed beds. The parasite Dermo is decimating the oyster population in the bay and the lack of funding prevents the equitable use of the state’s oyster industry, it states.

The short and long term economic impact resulting from the loss of jobs in the industry could include a reduction in the staff at the Haskin lab and Rutgers’ Cape Shore lab, as well as a decrease in oysters, which, as filter feeders, benefit the bay environment.

Oystermen and the Delaware Bay Shellfish Council have complained in recent years that the lack of research into the amount of seed oyster survival and the amount of mortality, and deletion of funds for research, to find a cure for Dermo and MSX, which are decimating the oyster grounds and seed beds, has hurt the resource.

The committee requests in its (See OYSTER, Page A-5)

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— Barney Hollinger, Commercial Twp. committee man

Oyster

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resolution that funds be reinstated and dedicated to oyster research and never removed and that funding be used to find a cure for Dermo and MSX.

Copies are to be sent to the governor, to all state legislators representing Cumberland, Salem and Cape May Counties and the freeholders of those counties.

“Cape May County freeholders already have passed a resolution,” Hollinger said. “(Freeholder Director) Doug Fisher said he would support it. The governor cut funding so badly that most of the Haskin lab and people in it are going to be laid off and the Cape Shore lab is going to be closed. Every time funding came up she vetoed it,” he said of the governor.