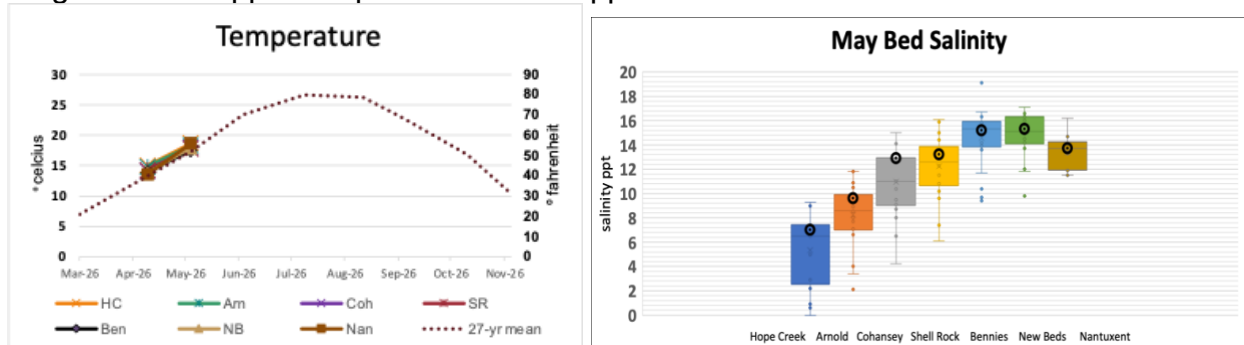
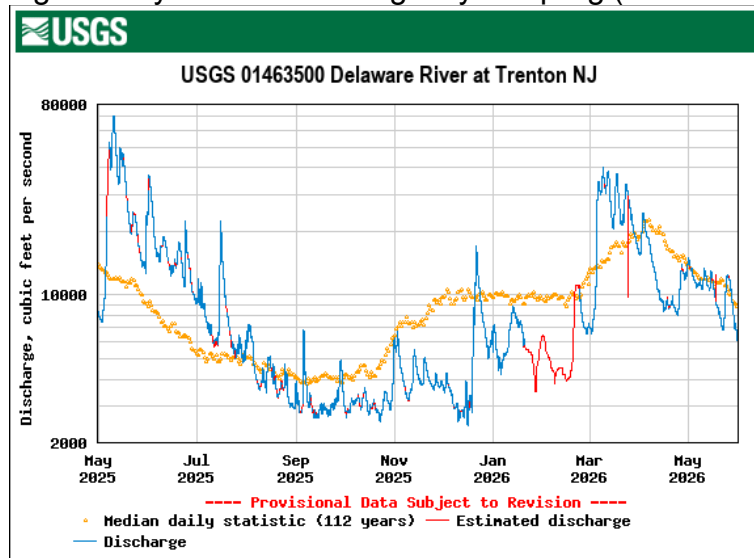


To: Delaware Bay Shellfisheries Council and NJ DEP Bureau of Shellfisheries
From: Iris Burt
Date: June 3, 2026
Re: Delaware Bay Seed Bed Monitoring

Oyster samples were collected on May 18, 2026 for our regular monthly monitoring program. Bottom water temperatures averaged 63.3°F (18°C), above the long-term seasonal temperatures. Salinity averaged 13.2 ppt; above the 27-year mean of 12.6. Salinity ranged from 7.5 ppt at Hope Creek to 15.4 ppt at Bennies.

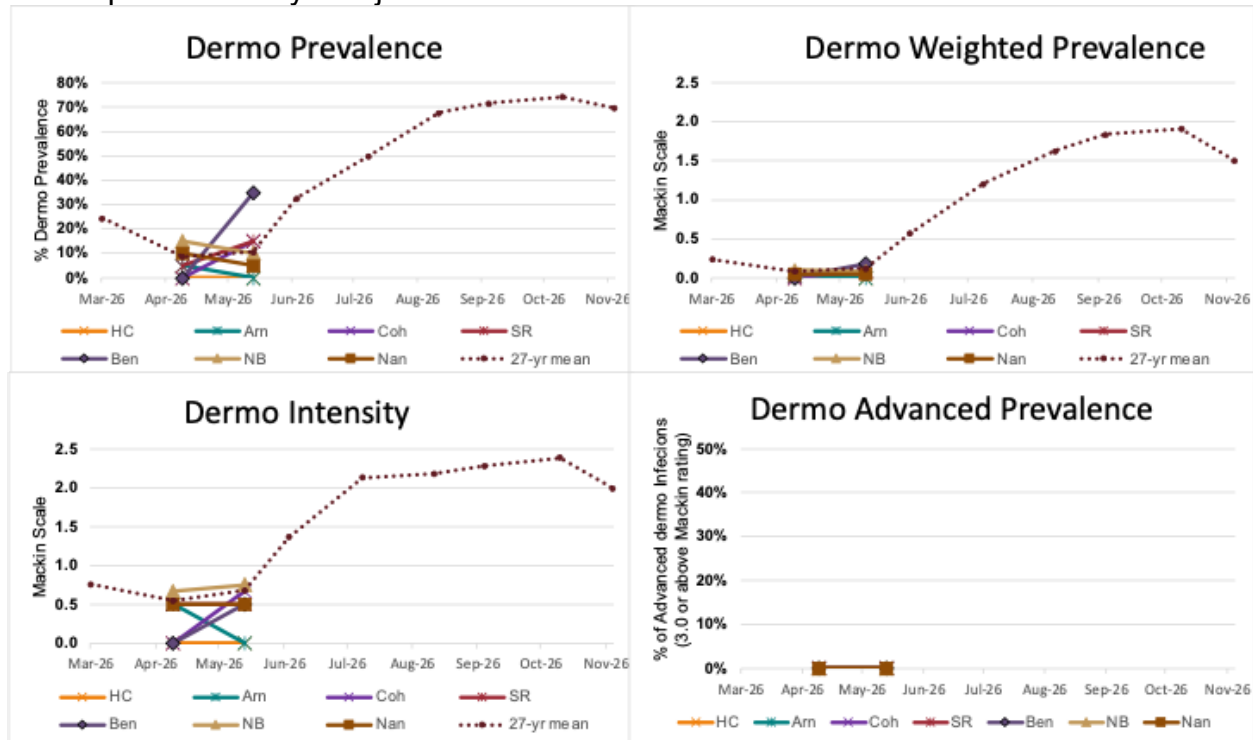


Delaware River discharge measured at Trenton, NJ (USGS monitoring station 01463500) has been lower than usual since last August – we have been in a drought. While water entering the Bay has increased, it has not offset the impact of the drought, resulting in the higher overall average salinity measured during May sampling (see USGS graph below).

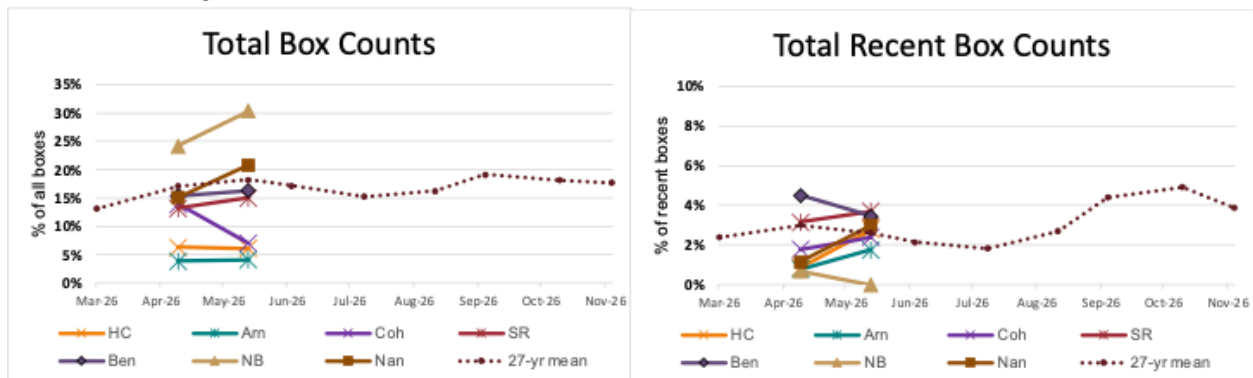


In the graph above, the blue line represents daily discharge for the past year relative to the long-term median values shown as a dotted yellow line. Data source:
https://nwis.waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv/?ts_id=195092&format=img_stats&site_no=01463500&begin_date=20250501&end_date=20260601

Dermo prevalence, weighted prevalence and intensity began to rise slightly in the areas from New Beds to Cohansey/Shell Rock. Prevalence was just above the long-term average, while wp and intensity was just below.



Total box counts also remained steady and below the long-term means for May. Some new boxes were observed but remained below the mean of 3%. Bennies had the highest new box counts at 5%.



The 2025 and 26 intermediate transplant sites were sampled on May 26. This was the first sampling since the 2026 transplants were moved to their recipient beds. Bed total mortality levels ranged between 7% and 12% with light new box counts. Total mortality counts on the 2025 intermediate transplant sites ranged from 9% to 20%. New box counts were very light. Dermo was seasonably low across all these sites.



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Shellplant sites from 2024 and 25 were also sampled on May 26. The 2024 site on Shell Rock averaged 43 mm in size and had no new mortality counted. We have discontinued sampling the 2024 Bennies site. The 2025 shellplant sites on Bennies Sand, Shell Rock and Ship John now average 20 mm. Some old drill mortality was noted on all 3 sites. No new boxes were counted.