



P.O. Box 96 • Menemsha, MA • 02552

March 2, 2020

Martha's Vineyard Commission
P.O. Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Re: Comment on MV Shipyard Expansion Project

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Martha's Vineyard Shipyard project. We, the Martha's Vineyard Fishermen's Preservation Trust (MVFPT), are a Massachusetts 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation established to i) Preserve the historic fishing fleets, communities, and economies of Martha's Vineyard; ii) Protect the marine populations and fishing grounds off of the coast of Martha's Vineyard and New England and; iii) Educate the community about its local fisheries.

Martha's Vineyard has relied on working waterfronts for hundreds of years to sustain various important livelihoods from fishing, to boat building and maintenance, to the freight of material on and off the island. As waterfront property values have continued to increase, the risk of losing these essential businesses and the infrastructures needed to maintain them has also increased. Our community has continually upheld an understanding and willingness to share, protect, and preserve our remaining working waterfronts for the diversified group of users who work to provide important services to the island and beyond. Without the collective support and effort from the towns and community members, these working areas would have been replaced long ago by luxury services and homes. Whereas the alternative to a working waterfront may offer more tax revenue opportunities, it also permanently changes the character, working heritage, food supply, and essential livelihoods—aspects that have continued to define Martha's Vineyard as the island it is for centuries.

While we respect and appreciate the services the Martha's Vineyard Shipyard currently provides for commercial and recreational boaters, we do not support their proposal to expand their recreational services and business footprint through the construction of a marina in the West Arm of Lagoon Pond. The West Arm is an important estuary that

serves as a vital habitat and nursery for a variety of finfish and shellfish species (i.e. quahogs, bay scallops, channeled whelk, winter flounder, eels, tautog, and more), Construction of a marina would impact the marine ecosystem these species and their different life stages depend on and displace the fishermen who have been sustainably harvesting these resources for generations. Many fish species exhibit natal fidelity, returning to the water body where they originated to spawn. This is true for winter flounder, alewives, blueback herring, and shad—all of which are found in Lagoon Pond. There is also observational evidence of a channeled whelk nursery ground in the West Arm observed by Dr. S. Edmundson in her research. The channeled whelk fishery is one the largest fisheries on the island (2018 landing data for Dukes County: 386K lbs, valued at \$1.6M (MA DMF, 2020)). If spawning grounds continue to be altered, fish and shellfish stocks will be unable to replenish themselves. Consequently, this one project could impact the very survival of many fish and shellfish stocks and the hundreds of fishermen, not only on the island, but beyond, who depend on them.

While we are in support of maintaining and preserving the island's working waterfronts, we believe this project is a direct threat to the diversified occupations that make up our working waterfront tradition and our community at large. In short, the West Arm already IS a working waterfront directly supporting a host of small-scale fishermen – each a small business in its own right – that pay taxes and churn capital back into the community and provide a food source. We do not want to see their many livelihoods endangered for the benefit of one business and the convenience of a collection of recreational boaters. We feel the benefit to 48 recreational boaters and one shipyard's profits is far outweighed by the demonstrable risk to the rest of the region's maritime commerce and marine habitats.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and your consideration on our concerns.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors and Fishermen Members of
the Martha's Vineyard Fishermen's Preservation Trust

