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Where are the Alewives?

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St. George School
 Mrs. England, Mrs. Schmanska
 "Where are the Alewives?"
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 Nature Note

"Where are the Alewives?"

The St. George marsh is a very quiet, peaceful place. Water from the marsh runs into Ripley's Creek then mixes with the salt water. The beginning of the south side of the marsh starts off very linear then opens up into a very wide and almost oval shape area at the north side. You can find the St. George marsh just by looking up St. George School, Maine on Google Maps.



Back in the 70s and early 80s the marsh provided bait for lobstering. Everybody thought that alewives would always be there. But in 1984 or 1985 the alewives were gone. It was as if a switch had turned off; there was no more source of bait in that area for lobstermen.

On April 25 at 1:03 PM on a Thursday our class took salinity samples at the St. George marsh. At this time of day there was a normal tide so there was no flooding. We took a sample in the marsh in three different spots of the marsh. We took a sample right in front of the dam. Then we took a sample on a rock behind the parking lot, and our last sample we took was to the left of the south side of the marsh.

What we are concerned about is that there is salt in our marsh. The samples we took at that time show that there is 0.06ppt-0.27ppt. A couple days earlier we had some tides that were high enough to flood into the marsh which could leave some salt behind. Originally there was no salt ever in the marsh, but now that the climate is a lot hotter the tides are a lot bigger.



Our community has tried to stock the marsh from 2009-2013, but they had no luck bringing the alewives run back. Then the state noticed that the culvert was too shallow so they put a new culvert in, in 2015. Since then there have been a few alewives in the culvert.

The work we are doing for the marsh is to help the alewives. We want to know if the salt really is the problem in the marsh and if it is then how can we fix it.



We are hoping that our experiment will give us an answer to what's happening in the marsh. The experiment is to see how the salt is affecting the different stages of alewives egg stage, newborn stage, and juvenile stage. If we can find out that the salt is the problem then we can find a way to solve it, whether it would be to put a higher dam so that salt water does not flood into the marsh or to find a way to keep the alewives in a non-salt water area. We are hoping to find an explanation as to why the alewives are not coming back.