

# MCA ISSUES FIRST RETAIL CANNABIS BUSINESS LICENSES

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne has officially licensed the first businesses in the community to enter the recreational cannabis industry. Two retailers and one cultivator have been licensed in compliance with the Akwesasne Interim Cannabis Regulation and thorough application process.

"We have received several applications for licensing throughout the past year and we appreciate our business community's patience as our staff worked to develop the required processes for safety and accountability," said Grand Chief Abram Benedict. "We know that many businesses have worked hard to ensure their operation meets the requirements for health and safety which was our first and foremost priority. Additional licensing will continue and we support the growth of our economy, addition of jobs, and influx of outside dollars that will help businesses thrive."

**CANNABIS** continued on page 3...

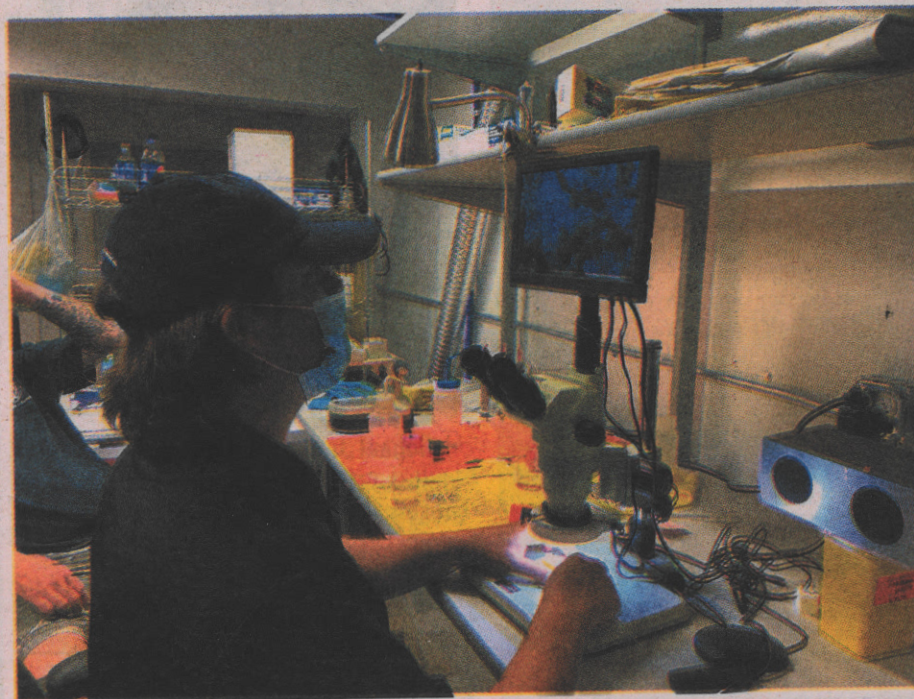
## In a unique project - SRMT Environment technicians work to save mussels

By Kaniehtonkie

Found in the back of a huge warehouse, two technicians carefully select glochidia for propagating bivalves. Sounds like something out of a science fiction movie. It isn't, it's Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe's (SRMT) Environment Division technicians trying to save naturally occurring mussels in our waterways. In fact, the SRMT is probably the only tribe to propagate freshwater mussels and likely the first in New York State to successfully rear surviving juvenile mussels for in-river placement and restoration.

Back in January 2020, the SRMT Tribal Council and Administration gave support to the mussel project and approved the Environment Division plans to retrofit a portion of an existing Tribal owned building (the former bingo palace) to conduct this year-round aquaculture activity for environmental restoration. Despite COVID-19 interruptions, SRMT Environment Division was able to complete this construction, and maintain live animals (mussels) this spring 2020.

To date, the SRMT received \$360,131



Colby Bowman searches for feeding glochidia, to eat the glochidia release a 'foot' to catch food and then quickly pull the leg back in. Interesting fact - mussels do not have brains.

in USEPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funds to support the restoration of freshwater mussels in the lower Grasse River for propagation and re-seeding/stocking. They anticipate future funding to continue efforts for 3-5 years.

In a press release by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on July 15, Arconic will provide more than \$2.25 million to protect and restore critical habitat at the Grasse River Federal Superfund site in Massena,

**MUSSELS** continued on page 5...

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# In a unique project - SRMT Environment technicians work to save mussels



With any scientific project, aligning all of the variables takes time; the right water temperature, the right plastic, the proper hoses, the water filtering and cleaning function of the freshwater mussel.

Jay Wilkins holds a freshwater mussel, because of the length of time they take to grow and reproduce, propagating mussels is essential to their survival here.



You've seen mussels along our riverbeds, but you will never see another mussel in the St. Lawrence River – again. Zebra mussels invaded their habitat and virtually eliminated them. If you run your finger along the shell, you can count how old they are with each line representing one year of growth.



A baby mussel.

## MUSSELS continued from cover...

New York.

The PR read in part, “Arconic is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to clean up contamination in the Grasse River, but was not being held to New York State’s stringent standards for habitat protection, driving DEC to reach this agreement and help save critically important freshwater mussels and other natural resources”.

EPA had refused to incorporate DEC’S requests into NYS’ habitat reconstruction requirements.

DEC stated, “The Grasse River’s freshwater mussel community is remarkable for its density and diversity; at least 15 different species have been found here. The mussels perform the critical functions of nutrient cycling, sediment structure, and forage base”.

According to DEC approximately eighty percent of the freshwater mussel community would be lost in the Grasse River cleanup due to mussels’ inability to escape and a slow reproductive rate.

To date, and through the combined efforts of the SRMT, DEC and Akwesasne community members, more than 200,000 mussels have been moved out of harm’s way. Now hundreds of thousands of additional mussels will be saved as a result of this agreement with Arconic.

The SRMT is focusing on propagating 3-species most impacted by Superfund remedy impacts: eastern lampmussel

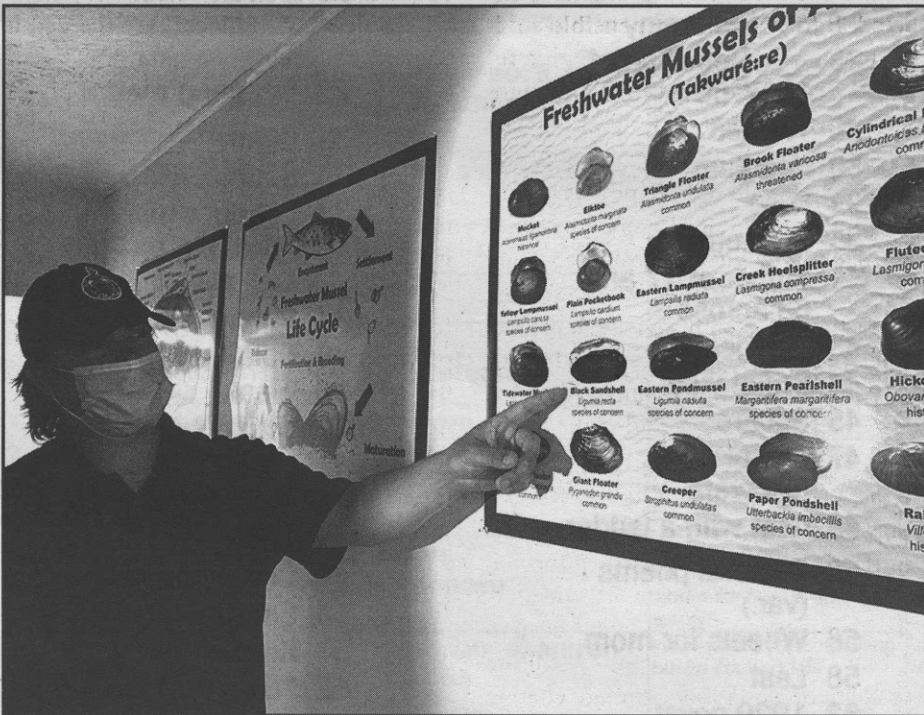
(*Lampsilis radiata*), pink heelsplitter (*Potamilus alatus*), and fragile paper-shell (*Leptodea fragilis*) as listed by common name and then scientific Latin name. The SRMT will be propagating 30,000 to 50,000 animals over the next 5 years.

The SRMT is also working in partnership with USFWS Genoa National Fish Hatchery providing technical expertise and training to SRMT. In addition to working with the New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) the SRMT is working with New York State Museum (NYSM) for mussel restoration in the lower Grasse River.

The New York State Museum plays an interesting role in providing a historic and preservationist view on mussels; what are mussels used for, were they eaten, were they used for decorative purposes, jewelry, buttons and more. The inside shell of the pink heel splitter (*Potamilus alatus*) is just that – a beautiful shade of light pink.

The SRMT Environment Division Mussel Propagation Team includes Jessica L. Jock, Colby Bowman, and Jay Wilkins.

Jock, SRMT Remediation and Restoration Program Manager stated, “This Arconic agreement is an important milestone in recognizing the significance of freshwater mussels in the Grasse River. Additional funding and efforts will contribute towards the shared Department and SRMT benthic recovery goals in the St. Lawrence River AOC.”



Bowman pointing out the number of local mussels in our area.

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