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Whales and Clams Wash Up on Revere Beach

By Sue Woodcock

It was an interesting week at America's first public beach, first, millions of clams washed onshore early last week and on Friday morning a badly decomposing juvenile humpback whale washed up on the beach near the state police barracks.

A curious crowd gathered to inspect the 25-foot male juvenile humpback whale. Some covered their mouth and nose to fend of the smell. It was so badly decomposed that a vertebrae was exposed. Another whale also washed up on Little Brewster Island in the outer Harbor on Friday afternoon.

The juvenile whale on Revere Beach had been floating around the waters for a while, first floating off Gloucester, then washing up on rocks in Cohasset. Officials there decided to pull the whale out into the harbor and it ended up landing on Revere Beach.

Bruce Berman of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay said recent rough seas seemed to have stirred them up. Berman also gave a nod to climate change also having an impact.

"Eighty-five percent of the whale deaths come from ship strikes," Berman said.

On the matter of the clams, Berman said, "they were pushed up on the beach by wind and tide and they die in the sun," Berman said. "There are tons of healthy clams. I don't think there's anything wrong with them involving pathogens or bacteria.

Isabella Russo and Alexa Giannino came to the beach to see the whale.

"I've never seen a whale," Giannino said.

"It's amazing I've never seen anything like it," Russo said. "The smell is awful.

Crews from the New England Aquarium and the Division of Marine Fisheries took samples and the vertebrae from the whale for research.

The DCR buried the juvenile whale carcass at Revere Beach Reservation per the recommendation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Working with the City of Revere's Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to ensure approval and compliance with the Wetlands Protection Act, the Department of Conservation and Recreation buried the surf clams that washed up along the beach.

According to the Department of Conservation and Recreation, there have been several die offs of marine species this summer. There were thousands of menhaden fish dead in the Mystic River in July.

The Division of Marine Fisheries is investigating the incident and collected samples from the beach, which have been sent to an out-of-state laboratory for analysis. The DMF expects preliminary results in the coming days. It's unknown if the two whales' deaths were related.