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Whale fatality likely caused by boat strike; disagreement over clam fatality connection

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Tara Vocino

A 30-foot baby humpback whale washed up on Revere Beach on Friday, causing a stir in the city; a small- and large-market media frenzy; and on social media. However, the cause of death is undetermined at this time.

“Eighty-percent of whale deaths are caused by ship strikes,” Save the Harbor/Save the Bay spokesperson Bruce Berman said. “When it arrived in Revere from Cohasset (about 33 miles away), the whale was so badly decomposed that an autopsy wouldn’t be useful. But the cause could have been something else going on that scientists and the aquarium staff are researching.”

Berman said he doesn’t believe that the mass clam fatality, brought on by global warming, that stunk up Revere Beach last week is related to the whale fatality. The whale’s mom’s name is Venom, but her baby, which is only one to two years old, is unnamed due to its age.

He went on to say that Revere residents care deeply about their beach and the marine life.

“We have to continue to find ways to protect the marine environment and everything that lives in it,” Berman said. “It’s a dramatic thing. It makes you feel bad, whether you love animals or not.”

Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) spokesperson Troy Wall explained the discovery and removal process for the unnamed whale. The DCR took immediate action to cordon off the area surrounding the whale and contacted the New England Aquarium, which visited the site and inspected the carcass, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Revere Conservation Commission, which assisted in the development of a plan to remove the

whale from the intertidal zone of the beach, according to Wall.

“In accordance with recommendations from NOAA, MassDEP, and the Revere Conservation Commission, the DCR buried the whale approximately 10 to 12 feet deep at the reservation, which was completed by early Friday evening,” Wall said.

Resident and beachgoer Nancy Santari is concerned about the whale’s burial location. “About two weeks ago, I went for a swim, and when I emerged from the water, I felt a slime all over my body,” Santari said. “I don’t think it was a good idea to bury the whale on the beach.”

Berman responded that the water is tested daily for swimming purposes, and it is safe and healthy for swimming.

Santari said the slime is disgusting and that someone should be held accountable. She added that this whale was decomposing for a month in her bay. Based on what she noticed, she thinks that the clam fatality may be related.

“The bacteria killed the millions of baby clams during this time,” Santari said. “It was only in this area where all the clams were dying. Farther up the beach, there were no dead clams. Then, they buried the whale on the beach. Won’t the same bacteria kill generations of clams to come?”