

Implementation of the National Shellfish Initiative

Current Accomplishments and Key Actions for FY'13

- Following the announcement of the National Shellfish Initiative, Washington State became the first state to respond with its own effort. The Washington Shellfish Initiative is an agreement among federal and state agencies, tribes, the shellfish industry, and the restoration community to restore and expand Washington's shellfish resources to promote shellfish aquaculture and create family-wage jobs. The Initiative has resulted in several outcomes so far:
 - **Ocean Acidification Blue Ribbon Panel:** Consisting of tribal, state, federal and local policy makers; scientific experts; public opinion leaders; and industry representatives, the panel has focused on understanding the science and effects of ocean acidification and recommending actions to respond to increasing ocean acidity. The panel has held six meetings. See the [Washington Dept. of Ecology website](#) for more details.
 - **Streamlining shellfish aquaculture permitting:** NOAA Fisheries is working with state and federal partners to develop a consistent process to improve timeliness of shellfish aquaculture permit decisions while ensuring regulatory compliance. An interagency Shellfish Permitting Team has been formed and will select pilot projects to permit under the new process.
 - **Native Oyster Restoration Hatchery:** NOAA Fisheries has funded, in partnership with the Puget Sound Restoration Fund, the State of Washington, and the University of Washington, the construction of a new hatchery at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center's Manchester Lab. The facility will establish a hatchery breeding program for native oyster restoration to increase seed production. The facility also may be used to breed pinto abalone, another species in decline.
- The NOAA Restoration Center is developing an oyster restoration monitoring manual that identifies preferred metrics and protocols to increase consistency in evaluating the performance of oyster reefs. This manual includes metrics such as fish utilization, and marsh/shoreline protection, in addition to oyster-based parameters. A draft was provided to public in 2012, with the expectation that a final document will be released in 2013. For more information about this and other NOAA Restoration Center efforts associated with the initiative, please contact [Summer Morlock](#).

- NOAA's Office of Aquaculture and Northeast Regional Office (NERO), the Food and Drug Administration, and Massachusetts state officials are working with local fishermen to examine the feasibility of a demonstration farm for mussels to be sited in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Gulf of Maine off of Massachusetts. NERO received funding from the Office of Aquaculture to cooperate with fishing industry partners and a local community college to identify a farm site. An application has been submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The National Sea Grant Law Center, in cooperation with the Office of Aquaculture, analyzed the legal requirements for growing mussels in the EEZ. The NSGLC publish a legal memo, which is available [here](#).
- The Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture's Regulatory Task Force, in collaboration with the National Ocean Council and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, is developing a framework to facilitate federal agency activities relating to shellfish aquaculture permitting as the first of several planned efforts to improve regulatory efficiencies for commercial aquaculture.
- The Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association, representing the commercial shellfish industry, together with partners from NOAA, multiple agencies under the State of California, and Sea Grant Extension are taking initial steps towards developing a California Shellfish Initiative. The collaborative effort is using the Washington State Shellfish Initiative as a model and is engaging with the California Governor's Office, the Corps of Engineers, native shellfish restoration groups, university and private research and educational institutions, various NGOs and individual commercial shellfish growers to begin development of such an initiative. A kick-off meeting bringing all these representatives together to start framing an initiative is likely to occur in the next few months.