

## **NOAA National Shellfish Initiative**

The goal of the National Shellfish Initiative is to increase shellfish aquaculture for commercial and restoration purposes, thereby stimulating coastal economies and improving ecosystem health. The focus is on bivalves or mollusks, not on crustaceans. This initiative will help meet the growing demand for seafood while creating jobs, restoring depleted species, conserving habitat for important commercial, recreational, and endangered fish species, improving water quality, and stabilizing and protecting coastlines.

Put simply, this initiative recognizes the broad suite of benefits provided by shellfish aquaculture and aims to increase shellfish production and wild shellfish populations in U.S. coastal and marine waters. To that end, NOAA – in collaboration with public and private partners – will focus on the following five topics:

1. ***Enhanced shellfish restoration and farming*** – Support the authorization of shellfish sanctuaries/restoration sites and additional aquaculture permits/leases that are aligned with the twofold goal of providing environmental and economic benefits; build hatchery capacity to supply seed for commercial shellfish production and public/private restoration projects; and develop innovative culture and post-harvest processing methods.
2. ***Research on environmental effects*** – Conduct research on the interactions between shellfish and the environment in terms of climate change, ocean acidification, naturally occurring pathogens and parasites, and other factors; gather data needed to assess and refine restoration strategies and priorities; examine synergies with the shellfish industry.
3. ***Spatial planning*** – Engage in local and regional planning efforts to site commercial shellfish production and shellfish restoration projects. This will include engaging with the Regional Planning Bodies that carry out coastal and marine spatial planning under the National Ocean Policy.
4. ***Streamlined permitting*** – Improve coordination among federal agencies to facilitate timely permitting of shellfish farms and restoration projects; develop model permit processes; participate in reissuance of Army Corps of Engineers' Nationwide Permit 48 for commercial shellfish aquaculture.
5. ***Innovative financing*** – Develop indicators that “monetize” ecosystem services provided by shellfish aquaculture, such as nutrient reduction and carbon sequestration. (Payments for ecosystem services, were they available, may spur participation in both commercial and restoration aquaculture.)

**Near-term actions include the following:**

- July/August – Reach internal-NOAA agreement between involved offices on goals and approaches. (e.g., NMFS, OAR, NOS)
- Late summer – Initiate targeted discussions with external stakeholders (e.g., calls, survey(s), and workshops with shellfish growers, NGOs) to solicit feedback, hone goals and approaches, and identify region-specific activities.
- Fall/Winter – Announce activities at meetings (e.g., Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association meeting in late September; East Coast Shellfish Growers Association meeting in November, National Shellfisheries Association meeting in 2012).

**Potential funding sources:****NOAA**

- NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture and other Fisheries budget lines
- NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation (including Habitat Conservation divisions, Restoration Center, and Chesapeake Bay Office)
- National Sea Grant Program
- Science Centers (NMFS, NOS)
- Saltonstall-Kennedy grant program
- NOS National Estuarine Research Reserve System
- NOS harmful algal bloom programs
- National Ocean Service Office of Sanctuaries

**Other Funding Sources**

- USDA aquaculture and soil conservation programs
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Foundations and non-governmental organizations