NOAA FISHERIES

National Shellfish Initiative

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Goal of the Initiative

The goal of the National Shellfish Initiative is to increase populations of bivalve shellfish in our nation's coastal waters—including oysters, clams, and mussels—through commercial production and conservation activities. NOAA recognizes the broad suite of economic, social, and environmental benefits provided by increasing shellfish populations, including:

- new jobs and business opportunities;
- meeting the growing demand for seafood;
- habitat for important commercial, recreational, endangered and threatened species;
- species recovery;
- cleaner water and nutrient removal; and
- shoreline protection.

Working with Partners

To maximize these ecological and economic benefits, NOAA will increase collaboration with public and private partners to seek opportunities in the following areas:

1. ***Marine planning and permitting*** – Make progress on siting commercial and restoration shellfish projects that meet existing federal, state, and local regulations for environmental protection, water quality, food safety, and public health. Engage local and regional groups that carry out marine planning. Improve coordination among federal, state, and local agencies to clarify permitting processes and make them more transparent, predictable, and efficient without compromising environmental health. Develop model permit process and collaborate with federal and state agencies to implement nationwide and regional permits for shellfish aquaculture.

2. ***Environmental research*** – Conduct and support research on environmental factors that affect shellfish populations (e.g., ocean acidification, pathogens); ecosystem benefits provided by shellfish (e.g., fish habitat, water filtration); potential impacts of shellfish projects on adjacent habitats and resources (e.g., submerged aquatic vegetation); and other data collection to assess and refine conservation strategies and priorities.

3. ***Restoration and farming techniques*** – Support innovative commercial culture and conservation techniques; enhance hatchery efforts to increase shellfish seed supply; and provide technical assistance and information across commercial and conservation activities.

4. ***Coordinated and innovative financing*** – Prioritize and coordinate funding among conservation, commercial, and research activities. Promote opportunities to leverage public investments. Explore options to place monetary value on ecosystem services provided by shellfish projects (e.g., nutrient reduction, carbon sequestration).

Coordinating with Federal Agencies

NOAA is seeking to leverage its existing staff, regulatory authorities, and grant programs to implement this initiative. To identify targeted actions for implementation, NOAA will be coordinating with other federal agencies and reaching out to potential participants from industry, restoration groups, academia, states, tribes, and other stakeholders. In addition, we will be reviewing:

- recommendations provided by industry and professional scientific shellfish associations based on recent surveys of their membership;
- research priorities and restoration strategies identified by industry associations, restoration groups, states, tribes, and others; and
- priorities for upcoming NOAA grant competitions.

Contact Us

If you have questions or comments regarding the National Shellfish Initiative, please contact:

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- Summer.Morlock@noaa.gov, NOAA Restoration Center, 301-427-8677

If you have specific project ideas, please contact the appropriate NOAA Fisheries Regional Aquaculture Coordinator (A) or Shellfish Restoration Coordinator (R) for your region (identified below). For Alaska, which does not yet have coordinators, please contact the Office of Aquaculture.

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