



NOAA's 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.

Overview of the National Shellfish Initiative

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 a limited number of actions under each of 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. **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.

Overview of NOAA's National Shellfish Initiative, cont'd

4. **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.
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.)

NOAA is seeking to leverage its existing staff, science knowledge and capabilities, regulatory authorities, and grant programs in partnership with others to implement the Initiative. An internal staff work group led by the NMFS Office of Aquaculture (with participation from several NMFS headquarters and regional offices, NOAA science centers, and the National Sea Grant Program office) is coordinating NOAA's efforts. To identify priorities and specific opportunities, this staff group is

- reaching out to industry participants, restoration groups, states, and others;
- reviewing recommendations provided by the National Shellfisheries Association and the East Coast Shellfish Growers Association based on recent surveys of their membership;
- reviewing research priorities and restoration strategies identified by industry associations, restoration NGOs, and others;
- reviewing topics and priorities for upcoming NOAA grant competitions (budget permitting); and
- reaching out to other DOC (e.g., Economic Development Administration) and federal agencies (e.g., USDA and NSF) to identify and coordinate grant opportunities to support the Initiative.

For more information:

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