



NOAA FISHERIES

Office of Aquaculture
Office of Habitat

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:

Addressing Ocean Acidification

Under Governor Christine Gregoire, the State of Washington convened an '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 behind and effects of ocean acidification and recommending actions to respond to increasing ocean acidity.

The panel has held six meetings and issued the report, '[Ocean Acidification: From Knowledge to Action](#).' The 2013-2015 state budget provides \$1.82 million to the University of Washington to set up a center on ocean acidification and for the research and monitoring actions recommended by the panel. More information can be found at the State of Washington Department of Ecology [Ocean Acidification webpage](#).

Permitting Shellfish in Washington State

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. The Shellfish Interagency Permitting team has reviewed commercial and restoration pilot projects resulting in the issuance of permits for seven total new projects (5 for commercial geoduck and 2 for restoration of Olympia oysters).

Native Oyster Restoration

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.

Oyster Restoration Monitoring Manual

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, marsh/shoreline protection, and 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](#).

Offshore Mussel Culture

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 work 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 resulting legal memo is available [here](#).

Streamlining Shellfish Aquaculture Permitting

The Interagency Working Group on Aquaculture (formerly, the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture) 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 streamline federal agency review of shellfish aquaculture permitting. This is the first of several planned efforts to improve the regulatory efficiency for commercial aquaculture.

California Shellfish Initiative

Initial steps towards developing a California Shellfish Initiative are being taken by stakeholders including NOAA, the State of California, Sea Grant Extension, the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association (representing the commercial shellfish industry), and shellfish restoration groups. The collaborative effort is using the Washington State Shellfish Initiative as a model. A kick-off meeting bringing all these representatives together to start framing the initiative is scheduled for September 2013.