

**Connecticut Shellfish Initiative
Accomplishments to Date (as of August 2019)**

About: The Connecticut Shellfish Initiative is a multifaceted effort to grow commercial and recreational shellfisheries, revitalize natural shellfish beds and increase public awareness about the economic, environmental and cultural importance of bivalve shellfish. The initiative is facilitated by staff from Connecticut Sea Grant and NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service Milford Laboratory and directed by partners from industry, regulatory agencies, environmental advocacy groups, academia and the private sector. In 2014, partners were convened for the first time to identify and provide context for issues, concerns, opportunities and challenges to growth. A series of meetings to gather public input followed, and in 2016 the first version of the *Connecticut Shellfish Vision Plan* (<http://shellfish.uconn.edu>) was published. The plan contains specific recommendations towards responsible growth of commercial and recreational shellfisheries. A subsequent implementation plan identifies the necessary steps to achieve the goals of the initiative. In 2018, a working group was established to identify shellfish restoration priorities for the state. In the same year, in preparation for an expanded public outreach campaign, a survey was undertaken to better understand residents' knowledge, perceptions, preferences and purchasing patterns regarding Connecticut seafood, including farm-raised shellfish. In 2019, a survey of commercial shellfishermen about their research needs was conducted in January, and in the summer, meetings were held to provide updates to the 2016 Vision Plan. One of the key successes of the initiative (to date) has been bringing diverse stakeholders together to successfully address common but sometimes highly divisive issues.

This document outlines the initial efforts to develop the vision plan and subsequent accomplishments and impacts. Updates to the Vision Plan are provided in an accompanying document.

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Year 2017 Accomplishments and Impacts

Jobs and Economy

- New or expanded commercial shellfish operations = 8
- New or expanded commercial seaweed operations = 2
- Approval of hiring plan for DA/BA positions = 5
- New position for nutrient bioremediation outreach = 1

Research

- Project funded to demonstrate economic value of harvested and non-harvested shellfish
- Project funded to conduct economic impact study for recreational shellfish harvest sector
- Project funded to conduct survey on residents' knowledge, perceptions & preferences for Connecticut seafood

Outreach and Engagement

- Connecticut Shellfish Booth at various public events
- Connecticut Shellfish Aquaculture 101 Workshops held for regulatory agencies
- National Shellfish Initiative Workshops facilitated at meeting of the National Shellfisheries Association and Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation Conference

Management, Policy and Planning

- Branford Initiative Area: a new licensing process for access to shellfish growing areas
- Creation of Municipal Shellfish Management Plan (SMP) Template
- Town of Madison is first town to adopt municipal SMP template

Year 2018 Accomplishments and Impacts

Jobs and Economy

- Branford Initiative Area aquaculture lease areas = 6
- New or expanded commercial shellfish operations = 2 new, 3 expanded
- New or expanded commercial seaweed operations = 3
- Positions at DA/BA (1 analyst, microbiologist, captain) = 3 filled
- Positions at DA/BA (pathologist) = 1 pending

Research

- Project funded to demonstrate habitat value of shellfish aquaculture structures
- Project funded to validate method to determine viral deactivation performance at wastewater treatment plants and assessing associated opportunities for aquaculture adjacent to plants in Mystic and Greenwich

Outreach and Engagement

- Connecticut Shellfish Booth at various public events
- Connecticut Shellfish Aquaculture 101 Workshops held for regulatory agencies
- National Shellfish Initiative Workshops facilitated at meeting of the National Shellfisheries Association
- Aquaculture Mapping Atlas moves to new software platform with data updates

Management, Policy and Planning

- Town of Greenwich is second town to adopt municipal SMP template
- Town of Groton is third town to adopt municipal SMP template
- Town of Stonington develops municipal aquaculture guidance
- Direct Marketing Guide for Connecticut Shellfish published

2019 Accomplishments and Impacts

Jobs and Economy

- Positions at DA/BA (GIS specialist) = 1 hired
- New or expanded commercial shellfish operations = 4
- New or expanded commercial seaweed operations = 1
- CT Department of Agriculture Attorney = 1 hired

Research

- Project funded to better understand pathogenic strains of *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*
- DABA Fisheries Biologist trained at Bigelow Laboratory in Maine in Harmful Algal Bloom Detection

Outreach and Engagement

- Shellfish Aquaculture Ecotour Piloted with Adventure Mystic and CT Cultured Oysters
- National Shellfish Initiative Workshops facilitated at meeting of the National Shellfisheries Association
- Norman Bloom and Sons provided several tours to school groups, restaurant personnel, state/city/town employees, politicians, environmental groups, yacht clubs, private businesses, and other groups:
 - 2016 = 28 tours - 213 people
 - 2017 = 27 tours - 450 people
 - 2018 = 43 tours - 592 people
 - 2019 = 39 tours - 716 people (as of 08/21/19)

Management, Policy and Planning

- Updated Connecticut Aquaculture Permitting Guide Published
- Seaweed Aquaculture Hazards Guide in draft form
- Research leads to expansion of commercial harvest areas in Mystic
- DABA Published 2019 Connecticut Marine Biotoxin Management Plan for PSP & Connecticut Marine Biotoxin Contingency Plan for ASP, DSP, NSP, and AZP
- DABA Expanded rapid testing for HAB toxins in waters and shellfish
- DABA developed procedures for HAB monitoring by shellfish commissions
- Agriculture hired staff attorney and Aquaculture developing regulations for leasing and licensing of shellfish harvest

2020 Accomplishments and Impacts

Jobs and Economy

- TBD

Research

- TBD

Outreach and Engagement

- Connecticut Shellfisheries book to be published by The History Press (Author Shannon Duggan)
- Public Engagement and Shellfish Aquaculture sessions facilitated at meeting of the National Shellfisheries Association and Aquaculture America

Management, Policy and Planning

- TBD