

EAST COAST SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION



The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association represents over 1,500 shellfish farmers from Maine to Florida. These proud stewards of the marine environment produce sustainable, farmed shellfish while providing thousands of jobs in rural coastal towns.

The ECSGA informs policy makers and regulators to protect a way of life.

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The Mouth of the Bay COVID-19 Relief Efforts



Executive Director
Bob Rheault

I have always said I love this job because I get to work for some really great people: hard-working farmers who love growing food, proud business owners who invariably believe their products are the best in the world. But it's in times like these that my job takes on a new sense of urgency. Our members are taking a huge hit. Sales are a small fraction of what's needed to cover expenses, and the uncertainty about what the future holds is eating away at everyone's confidence.

It has become painfully obvious that the fate of our industry is inextricably tied to the survival of restaurants (perhaps more so than any other food). When the restaurants were shuttered oyster sales plummeted 90 percent in just a few days. While some restaurants are trying to hang on with takeout and delivery, the National Restaurant Association estimates that 40 percent are now closed. Although some eateries are starting to reopen cautiously, there is huge uncertainty around how many will ultimately survive. Margins were tight before the crisis and it is hard to see how

restaurants can survive if customers are afraid to come or if they are required to limit seating capacity.

Government relief efforts have been uneven, and often the programs have been rushed out the door without fully defining the rules and expectations. Announcements about the various relief programs are coming out at a furious pace, often changing on the fly. If you are not a member of our Listserv you are missing out on the main tool I have for keeping members informed about what's available and how to apply.

We are also posting updates on our website blog (ecsga.org/blog) on a regular basis. We continue to monitor and disseminate information about various government programs offering direct payments and loan opportunities. Many ECSGA members have already taken advantage of the Payroll Protection Plan funds and the Economic Injury Disaster Loans offered through the Small Business Administration.

In efforts to avert a price collapse, we continue to work on several fronts, highlighted below. Stay tuned, because this is clearly a dynamic environment.

❑ The CARES Act provided \$300 million in Fisheries Disaster funds, which has been released to the interstate marine fisheries commissions for distribution to the states. Now each state will determine how to

— Continued on page 4

Perspectives: Navigating the Pandemic



Paul Manley, Charlotte, N.C.

We have two oyster bars in Charlotte: Sea Level NC and The Waterman. Sea Level closed on March 16 and we have not re-opened for take out, etc. Sea Level is located in uptown Charlotte, which has been all but abandoned by workers. The Waterman, located in South End Charlotte, is open for to-go business, and we have tinkered with our offerings since we started on Friday, March 20. We are currently experiencing about 20 percent of our normal sales. It's enough to keep about eight people employed when we normally would have 50 staff right now. Not much else.

Since we were able to re-establish shipping from our partner farm, Morris Family Shellfish Farms, we have been selling home shucking kits including a knife, two dozen oysters, cocktail sauce, mignonette, etc. These have been very popular. We also started selling shucked on the half-shell for the first time ever and they are doing well.

Even at our very low sales volume, sourcing quality product is becoming more difficult. My concern is once we are able to ramp up, the supply lines will not be ready.

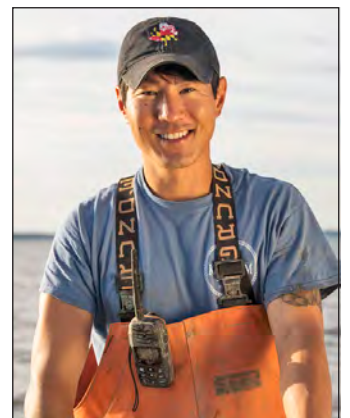
I believe, in my industry, that we are going to see a ton of attrition of small businesses. It's a slim-margin business and a lot of operators out there were in trouble before the pandemic. After all the federal funding and general goodwill runs out, it just won't be worth it to operate at 40, 50, 60 percent of historical sales.

Scott Budden, Orchard Point Oyster Co., Stevensville, Md.
www.orchardpointoysters.com

Sales are a mixed bag. Restaurant/wholesale sales went to zero in the matter of a week. We pivoted to retail within a week, and then online retail sales within several weeks. Sales have been consistent and have surged prior to holidays (Easter, Mother's Day) and following some good press pieces. Just this week we started shipping to the Southeast U.S. again, as they are re-opening restaurants there. Kind of a wait-and-see on how that goes and the subsequent demand flux.

We are hearing that things are pretty slow right now sales-wise, but that the growing season is off to a good start and promises to be a more "normal" year for Chesapeake growers; and that retail seems to be keeping some afloat, for now.

— Continued on page 8



Responding to Surveys Critical to COVID Funding

by Robert Rheault,
ECSCGA Executive Director

Growers often complain that they get surveyed to death. And it is true that we probably send out at least a half-dozen surveys a year on our Listserv. (I have actually rejected a couple that folks asked me to share because I didn't want you all to succumb to survey fatigue).

But the data you provide is incredibly important, especially now when we are trying to document



the value of our industry to the legislators and regulators who are calculating how to dole out COVID-relief funds. I know many growers are averse to sharing any financial data—even in an anonymous survey. Rest assured, we cannot identify you, and we have no intention of sharing individual financial information. We are only trying to help the industry. So

please help yourself, and take the time to let us help you by filling out the next questionnaire and the next census that comes your way.

A crack team of economists from Virginia Tech and Ohio State conducted a [broad industry survey](#) just as the COVID-19 crisis hit. They polled all kinds of aquaculture producers from March 23 to April 10, with 184 shellfish farmers (about 20 percent of U.S. farms) responding to the 15-minute detailed financial questions. The vast majority of participants hailed from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

Asked whether they thought their farm would survive the next three months without assistance, only 24 percent answered yes. A full 98 percent reported lost sales, and 42 percent had already laid off workers, with 24 percent more reporting they "will have to soon."

Nearly half (48 percent) of respondents indicated that they could hold market-ready product for one to three months before it would interfere with future crops. Several people were concerned about a lack of space for new seed, and a few noted that holding market-ready product was increasing the density of animals in their culture units, potentially leading to increased mortalities. A majority of respondents (69 percent) said that holding on to market-ready product would make it less marketable in the future.

A huge amount of information can be gleaned from this report, and importantly, the authors hope

to repeat the survey quarterly to see how we fare in the months ahead.

On May 8, I sent out a brief survey to nearly 600 Listserv subscribers to document some of the pain our industry is experiencing, hoping to provide data to the fisheries managers who are tasked with allocating the Fisheries Disaster Funds from the CARES Act. Unfortunately, only 63 respondents were willing to share any financial data, (almost all from N.Y., R.I. and Mass.) Given such a paltry sample size it is tough to draw many conclusions, but here's what I was able to find out:

- ❑ Respondents reported that sales in the last two weeks of March and April were off by an average of \$30K compared to 2019.
- ❑ Disturbingly, about 40 percent reported cutting prices.
- ❑ More than half had laid off crew, cancelled or cut back on gear orders, and reduced seed purchases.
- ❑ One grower lamented that "25 years of hard work [has been] flushed right down the drain."
- ❑ Another claimed to have recovered 30-40 percent of his 2019 sales volume by "selling on-line and spending every free moment marketing on social media. Its exhausting!"

Over the past several weeks I have had dozens of conversations with industry members from almost every part of the country. Equipment suppliers have been hammered, with many complaining that sales are off by as much as 50 percent. Many dealers were caught with large inventories and no place to sell them. It will be interesting to see how the supply chain handles the cautious reopening that most states are now implementing.

Interestingly, clam sales have been relatively robust. Supplies were tight going into the spring, so prices were strong and growers were regretting that they had not planted more. The restaurant shutdown took away some of the clam demand, but unlike oysters, a lot of clams are sold at retail, and many home chefs feel comfortable making clams linguini—no shucking required!

Visit https://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/ares/virginia-seafood/research/Impacts_of_COVID19.html to read about the Virginia Tech/Ohio State study.

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— Continued from page 1
COVID Relief Efforts

dole out those funds to the various fisheries and aquaculture firms that suffered pandemic-related declines in revenue of more than 35 percent (as compared to the prior five-year average). **Growers in every state should be actively talking to their fisheries managers now to ensure that shellfish farmers are not left out as each state develops its “Spend Plan.”**

- ❑ We are actively exploring ways to take some large product off the market to avert a price collapse. The ECSGA submitted a petition to the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service requesting that they consider purchasing oyster stew for distribution to food banks under their Section 32 program, designed to purchase excess agricultural products in order to keep prices stable.
- ❑ Included in the CARES Act was \$16 billion for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). The framework for this program was just rolled out and details are still hazy—at this point it is unlikely that shellfish farmers will be eligible. CFAP has set aside \$635 million while it considers the eligibility of aquaculture, nurs-

ery crops and cut-flower producers. They have requested financial information from growers through a Federal Register comment docket. To become eligible, producers must document a 5 percent price decline, and then might also receive consideration for unsold inventory. **Unfortunately, financial data submitted to the Federal Register would become publicly available!** This one is complicated and no one is yet certain whether shellfish farmers will qualify even after they submit their financial information. Stay tuned!

- ❑ In May a bipartisan group of 25 senators signed a letter to leadership requesting \$2 billion to purchase domestically harvested seafood products, with half of those funds intended to focus on seafood products not typically eligible. They also requested an additional \$1 billion in direct relief for payments to all fishery participants and seafood businesses. A bipartisan group of 49 House members sent a similar letter to leadership.
- ❑ Sea Grant is making \$4 million available for rapid-response proposals, some of which may be used to fund reef restoration projects. We were hoping to get some funds for restoration reefs through the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) into the



ALBERT O. FISCHER III/VINEYARD GAZETTE

Around 450 cars showed up at the Martha’s Vineyard Agricultural Society fairgrounds for bags of free oysters bought by an anonymous donor to help island farmers weather devastating sales losses due to restaurant closures during the pandemic.

HEROES Act, but couldn’t move quickly enough. We will continue to see if we can get some funds for these activities as the Senate starts to consider a response.

- ❑ I have been talking to The Nature Conservancy and the Pew Charitable Trusts in an effort to develop a bigger plan to conduct restoration plantings using large farmed oysters in each state. We are working together on legislative affairs and the daunting logistics of planning dozens of restoration projects in each of 18 East Coast and Gulf states.

❑ We are also working with the Seafood Nutrition Partnership and Sea Grant to encourage home consumption of all fishery products (but especially shellfish) through social media by posting recipes and cooking videos with the hashtag #eatseafoodamerica. With supply-chain issues surrounding pork and beef, we are hopeful that consumers will pivot to seafood, and especially healthy, nutritious, high-zinc shellfish products!

- ❑ I talk to the press almost daily and I have been hammering the concept that it is the civic duty of every American to buy a box of shellfish, and learn how to shuck to save a job.

❑ A philanthropist bought 16,000 oysters from Martha’s Vineyard farmers and handed out 36-count bags to eager island residents. Organizers estimated that around 450 cars showed up for the [Great Oyster Giveaway](#) on May 16, backing up traffic for miles. Similar efforts in towns across America funded by well promoted Go Fund Me campaigns could go a long way toward getting Americans to get comfortable with preparing oysters at home.

- ❑ Talented musician Matt Hobbs has recorded a song “50 Ways to Shuck an Oyster” and we have a videographer turning it into a film that we hope will help convince folks to try shucking at home (as soon as they stop laughing).

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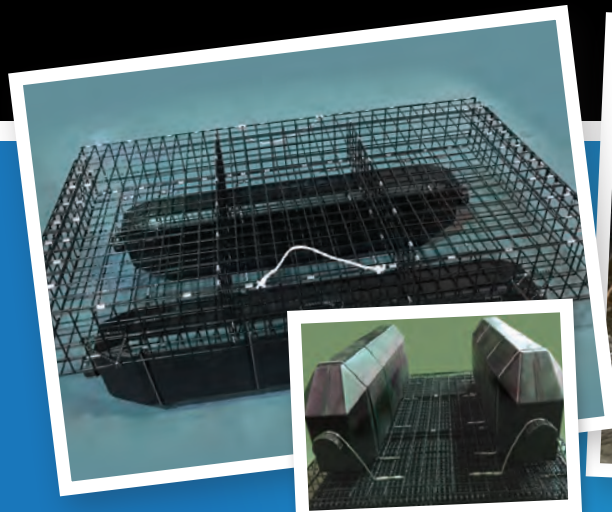
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ECSGA Membership Categories and Dues

Growers, dealers and equipment suppliers enjoy full voting rights. (If you are both a grower and a dealer simply ask yourself where most of your revenue comes from.) If you don't fall into one of these industry categories please consider joining as a non-voting associate member.

Member Type	Gross Annual Sales	Dues
Grower	\$0 to 50,000	\$100
Grower	\$50,000 to \$100,000	\$200
Grower	\$100,000 to 300,000	\$500
Grower	\$300,000 to 1 million	\$1,000
Grower	\$1 million to \$3 million	\$2,000
Grower	over \$3 million	\$3,000
Shellfish Dealers and Equipment Suppliers		\$250
Restaurant Ally		\$100
Non-voting Associate		\$50

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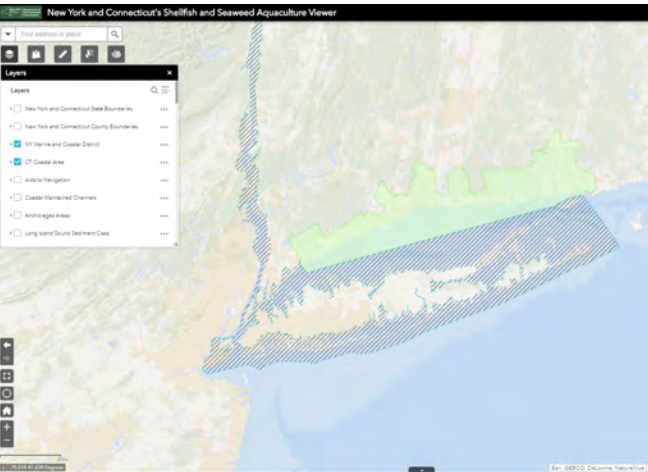


PAGE 6 ECSGA NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2 JUNE 2020

Online Aquaculture Siting Tool Released for N.Y., Conn.

By Nelle D'Aversa
NEIWPCC Environmental Analyst
Long Island Sound Study Bioextraction Coordinator

The New York Division of Environmental Conservation's (NYSDEC) Division of Water, Region 1 has released the New York and Connecticut [Shellfish and Seaweed Aquaculture Viewer](#) on the Long Island Sound Study website. The viewer is an interactive online map that provides spatial information for all of New York's Marine and Coastal District and of Connecticut's Coastal Area to assist prospective, new, or current aquaculture growers in siting or expanding shellfish and seaweed operations. The map provides detailed information on natural resources, environmental conditions, navigation, regulatory requirements and potential use conflicts, which all combine to aid in identifying potential locations for shellfish and seaweed farms.



A screenshot using the interactive tool for siting aquaculture operations, found at longislandsoundstudy.net/nutrient-bioextraction-overview-development/new-york-and-connecticuts-shellfish-and-seaweed-aquaculture-gis-map-viewer.

The tool is designed to help potential shellfish and seaweed growers and other users of the coastal area assess conditions based on existing datasets and to identify potential risks and long-term suitability for particular areas. Resource managers, program managers and other stakeholders will be able to use this tool for future decision making regarding bioextraction and the role it can play in reducing nitrogen in Long Island Sound and the South Shore Estuary of Long Island.

This online resource is the work of the Nutrient Bioextraction Initiative, which is a collaboration between the NYSDEC, the Long Island Regional Planning Council and the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission.

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— Continued from page 1
Navigating the Pandemic

We hope that the restaurant market rebounds, once social distancing phase-ins allow for greater seating capacity percentages. We hope our regular customers survive and everyone is able to pay their outstanding and past-due invoices. We fear that prices may decrease once the markets re-open, due to excess supply, but sincerely hope that demand can keep pace. We fear that it may be a bumpy process overall!

Pithy quote: *"It's easy to grin when your harvest comes in and you've got the shell market beat. But the man worthwhile, is the man who can smile, when his gear is too dense in the sea."*

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Chuck Wilson, Partner, Navy Cove Oysters, Fort Morgan, Ala.

The start of 2020 has been tough on all Gulf Coast Farms. The year began with unprecedented rainfall in the upper watersheds of the Mississippi, Ohio and rivers that feed the Tensaw Delta north of Mobile. Episodic health department closures and very low salinities (1-5 ppt) led to limited marketing; that was followed by an abrupt COVID-forced closure of virtually all markets in early March.

There have been limited retail sales in grocery stores and seafood markets, but all farms have been holding most of their now market-size product in the water. So we are facing a glut of large oysters that are tying up farm space and



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NAVY COVE OYSTERS

The Navy Cove Oysters crew, l to r, Shelby Allen, John Supan, Chuck Wilson, George Allen and Eric Bradley at the first Fort Morgan Oyster Festival hosted by Navy Cove Oysters and Sassy Bass Amazin' Grill. Navy Cove took a one-two punch this spring when heavy rainfall caused closures and then the pandemic hit.

straining gear as temperatures rise and spring hatchery production comes on line.

However, a little sun is starting to shine. Georgia, Florida, Texas and Alabama restaurants have opened or are opening this week at half throttle, so the markets are starting to open up (some). Another anecdotal observation is that the very low spring salinities in the region slowed growth of what was in the water, but oyster growth rates are almost back to normal now. The Gulf Shores and Orange Beach areas are seeing sudden increased tourism; it almost looks like pent-up demand for people getting out of the house and to the open beaches. Air travel to other countries is greatly constrained, if not shut down, so we are expecting a busy summer on the Gulf coast.

Observations from a New England shellfish dealer

This experience is worse than I ever imagined it could get. Four days after the national shutdown of restaurants (fittingly on Friday the 13th of March) we saw our sales were off by 97 percent. I had to lay off 21 great, dedicated employees—something I had vowed I would never do. We were caught with a bunch of product in our coolers that we couldn't return to growers, so we ran around to fire houses and donated tons of product to first responders. And still, quite a bit of product ended up in the dumpster.

We polled 150 of our customers and only 12 responded that they were seeing any demand—and it was all retail and generally only a trickle. Now I have two employees coming in two days a week to handle the few orders we have. Our customers have generally been great about paying what they owe, but some are just not able to pay, and we are not really expecting to see those funds until restaurants are able to reopen to near full capacity. Our sales today are up to about 10 percent of what we would normally expect to see.

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Blacklock Takes the Helm at NOAA Fisheries Office of Aquaculture

Danielle Blacklock has been hired as the Director of NOAA's Office of Aquaculture, replacing Dr. Michael Rubino. She will continue the office's work on regulation and policy, science, outreach, and international activities in support of U.S. aquaculture. Following are her thoughts on her new position.

Q: How did you become interested in aquaculture?

A: My interest in aquaculture initially came from my interest in food. I worked as a professional cook as a way to put myself through school and I was intrigued by the idea of growing something, of raising a product tide-to-table. Working in aquaculture allows me to support several things I am passionate about, including supporting coastal economies, increasing domestic seafood, and feeding our communities. Seafood occupies a unique role in the food supply, and even though it offers tremendous health benefits it is chronically under-consumed by Americans. I am excited to lead efforts in the sustainable expansion of domestic aquaculture to help the U.S. improve both food security and human health.

Q: What is NOAA Fisheries' role in support of aquaculture?

A: NOAA Fisheries' Office of Aquaculture focuses on several distinct priority areas, including regulation and policy, science, outreach and education, and international activities. Our office supports cutting-edge science as well as federal policy-making and regulation to grow sustainable marine aquaculture in the United States and to expand its social, economic and environmental benefits.

Q: How does NOAA support aquaculture at a regional level?

A: As the Office of Aquaculture continues its work at the national level, NOAA Fisheries' regional aquaculture coordinators are supporting industry growth in the regions. This dedicated network of coordinators helps current and prospective growers with everything from how to apply for permits to technical guidance on operating a farm. With a recent hire, the East Coast now has four full-time aquaculture coordinators—two in the New England/Mid-Atlantic Region and two in the

Southeast Region. These points of contact are a key resource to help growers understand the challenges and benefits of aquaculture in their region. The regional aquaculture coordinators' contact information can be found at www.fisheries.noaa.gov/contact-directory/regional-aquaculture-coordinators.

Q: What is your vision for marine aquaculture in the U.S.?

A: In the coming months and years, I envision the United States moving decisively toward becoming a global leader in sustainable seafood production. My goals as director of the Office of Aquaculture include showing that wild-capture and farmed seafood are intertwined, and that both are critical to our nation's future food supply. Our office will continue



NOAA FISHERIES

to work inclusively and transparently to establish the regulatory framework for sustainable farms in federal waters, while supporting additional development in state waters and associated land-based facilities such as hatcheries. Along with expanding the marine aquaculture industry we will also continue to support existing

producers through our research and development, technology-transfer efforts, and our multiple grant programs. Together these efforts can help us expand the sustainable aquaculture industry.

Q: What previous jobs have you enjoyed that best prepared you for this position?

A: I have both an educational background and professional experience in aquaculture. As a graduate student at the University of Washington, my research involved conducting a national census survey for shellfish growers. The survey focused on the perception of risk and how it impacted aquaculture business decisions. I am still grateful for the time farmers spent filling out the survey and sharing their unique perspectives to help myself and others understand industry needs and opportunities.

— Continued on page 10





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— Continued from page 9

NOAA Hires Danielle Blacklock

More recently, my role as an aquaculture specialist on detail to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) allowed me to examine aquaculture at an international level. While at FAO I co-led the development of Global Sustainable Aquaculture Guidelines, and I had the opportunity to explore other nations' marine aquaculture governance systems

and policies. Through this work I learned more about other approaches to industry management; I am looking forward to sharing these new perspectives in the U.S.

Q: What are some of your top COVID-related priorities for the next few months?

A: I know the virus is having quite an impact on the U.S. marine aquaculture industry, and I want to thank those who have reached out and reported what is happening in their businesses and in their communities. Short-term goals for our office include supporting the existing U.S. aquaculture industry through a variety of already established grant opportunities and continued research priorities addressing industry barriers.

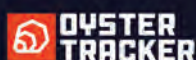
In addition, the Secretary of Commerce announced the allocation of \$300 million in fisheries-assistance funding provided by Sec. 12005 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) to states, Tribes

and territories with coastal and marine fishery participants who have been negatively affected by COVID-19. Privately owned aquaculture businesses growing products in state or federal marine waters of the United States, along with the hatcheries that supply them, may be eligible for these assistance funds. This includes all molluscan shellfish and marine algae as well as non-salmonid marine finfish grown in marine waters not covered by USDA.

Q: What message(s) do you think our growers most need to hear from NOAA?

A: Like many in the industry, those of us in the Office of Aquaculture have had to change the way we operate to work remotely, but we are still here for you. We may be using different tools or processes to get things done, but we are committed to our office priorities of fostering sustainable aquaculture development in the U.S. through our science, policy, outreach and stakeholder collaboration efforts.

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Schillaci Appointed NOAA Regional Aquaculture Coordinator

by Jennifer Goebel
Public Affairs Officer,
NOAA Fisheries

In December 2019 NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Office welcomed Chris Schillaci to our regional aquaculture program, stretching from North Carolina to Maine and including one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the U.S. marine aquaculture industry.

Chris brings considerable experience in aquaculture management to his position of Regional Aquaculture Coordinator, gained from more than 10 years with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). During his time with DMF, Chris worked on a wide range of topics, including aquaculture and shellfish management, shellfish sanitation, environmental permitting, seafood safety and more. He spent the last five years with DMF serving as the Aquaculture Program Lead, where he was responsible for the environmental review and permitting of marine aquaculture activities in the state. Chris served as the DMF *Vibrio* Management Program Coordinator, and represented the state on a number of committees at the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference, including the restoration, aquaculture, *Vibrio* illness response, and research guidance committees. He also represented the state on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Aquaculture Committee.

"My time with DMF was a great opportunity to gain hands-on experience with just about every aspect of shellfish resource and aquaculture management, from project siting and environmental review; to day-to-day operational management, harvest, and handling; to wholesale and retail sales," says Chris.

"I also had the opportunity to collaborate with researchers, managers and industry from around the region on a number of projects aimed at addressing regulatory and operational challenges for the aquaculture industry. That kind of collaboration and coordination is really what this job is all about."

Chris is a problem solver who really enjoys working in a collaborative manner with stakeholders from across sectors to come up with practical solutions to challenging problems. He looks forward to working with his NOAA colleagues, partner state and federal agencies, industry, and members of the scientific, academic, and NGO communities to support and grow sustainable aquaculture production in the region and beyond.



CHRIS SCHILLACI

Chris Schillaci (shown here yucking it up with a geoduck) is the newly appointed NOAA aquaculture coordinator in the Greater Atlantic Region, based in Gloucester and New Bedford, Mass. He previously worked as Aquaculture Program Leader and *Vibrio* Management Program Coordinator for the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries.

Chris holds a Bachelor's Degree in Conservation Biology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is currently a Master's candidate at the University of New Hampshire-Durham School for Natural Resources and the Environment, where his thesis work focuses on the use of environmental surveillance and epidemiology to manage *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* risk associated with oyster consumption.

Did You Recently Pivot to Online Sales?

As a service to our members we have beefed up the Buy Shellfish page ([ECSGA.org/buy-shellfish](https://www.ecsga.org/buy-shellfish)) on our website. Consumers can visit that page and search for growers who offer oysters, clams, shucking knives and merch online, at farmers markets or available for pickup or delivery; they can also search for farms that provide catering or farm tours, and can narrow their search by distance from any U.S. location.

If you're a member and you'd like to be added to our searchable database, head over to [ECSGA.org/farm-signup-for-buy-shellfish-page](https://www.ecsga.org/farm-signup-for-buy-shellfish-page) and fill out the online form. If you'd like to be listed but are not a member, you can join the association by filling out the online form at [ECSGA.org/join-ecsga](https://www.ecsga.org/join-ecsga) and pay your dues with Paypal or a credit card. If you'd rather go analog, fill out the membership form on page 6 and mail it back to us with your check.



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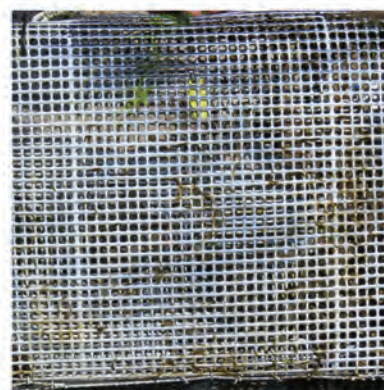
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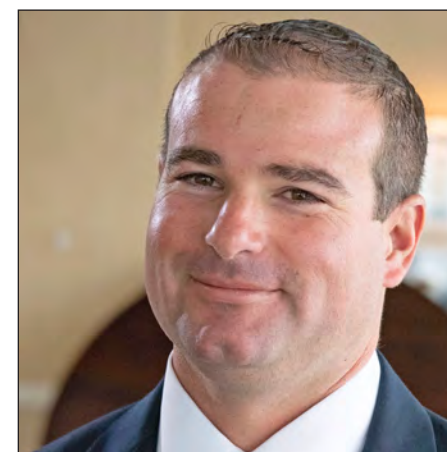


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Yarmosh Joins ECSGA Board

Brian Yarmosh has agreed to step up and take over for Ben Goetsch as the Connecticut representative on the ECSGA board of directors. After several years serving on the board, Ben is stepping down to take a new position as the State Aquaculture Coordinator at Rhode Island's Coastal Resources Management Council. We are grateful to Ben for all he has done for the association over the years.

Brian is the Director of Marine Operations for Briarpatch Enterprises in Milford, Conn., where he has been working for the past 21 years. He sits on the Stratford Shellfish Commission and is a member of the Stratford Water-



BRIAN YARMOSH

front Harbor Management Commission. He has traveled to the last four ISSC conferences to represent our industry. Brian began his career shellfishing with his grandfather at the age of 5 in Stratford, Conn. *Welcome aboard, Brian!*

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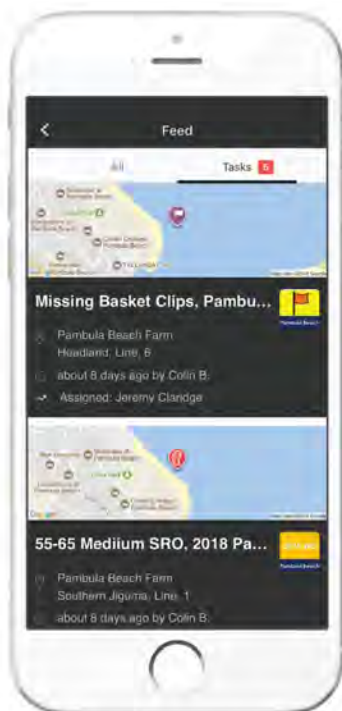
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Essential Oyster-Lover Survival Skills

by Julie Qiu,
founder In A Halfshell

A little over eight years ago, I published a blog post titled “How to Enjoy Oysters at Home” on In A Half Shell, and it has consistently been a top-performing page. Despite its popularity, the article read like a “nice to do,” or possibly a “better to do” guide, but never a “need to do.” Today, it’s a different story.

Knowing how to purchase, store, shuck and serve oysters at home have become essential skills for every oyster lover. With more growers offering direct-to-door shipping—and this was growing in popularity, even pre-COVID—



JULIE QIU

Julie Qiu is the founder of the oyster appreciation website, A Half Shell and a member of the ECSGA.

home consumption will increase. The current situation sucks, there’s no denying that. But I’m hoping that this pandemic can also be a catalyst for increased oyster and seafood consumption in our country.

I miss hosting in-person oyster shucking workshops or tasting events, but I’ve been pleasantly surprised by people’s eagerness to jump on a video call and practice shucking oysters. If you are shipping oysters right now, there is plenty that you can do virtually to educate while building brand engagement. For example, consider creating a simple “unboxing” video that guides the first-time recipient through everything and email it to them on the morning of the delivery date. (I would much rather watch a video than read a sheet of paper.)



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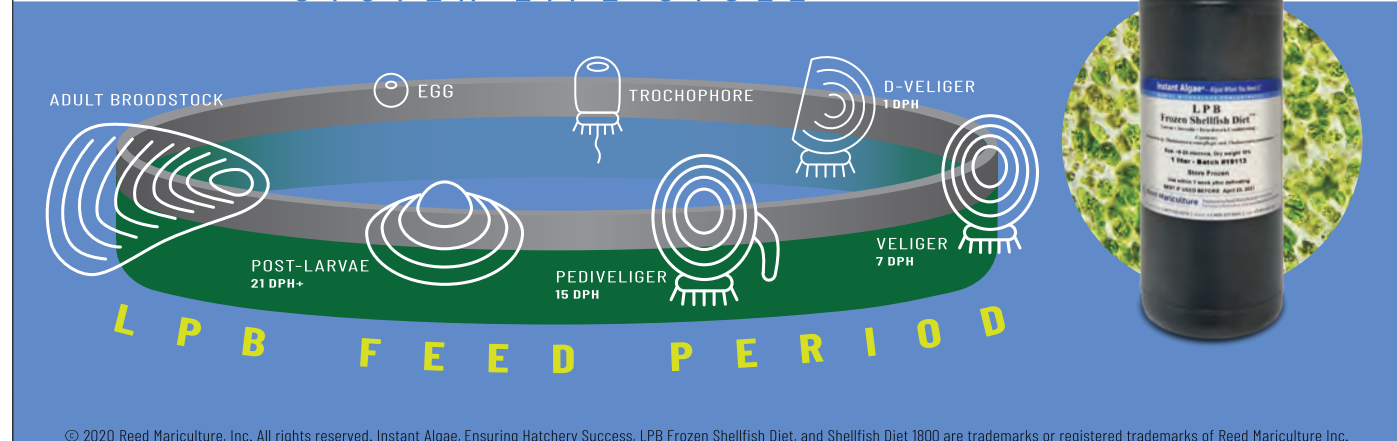
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Oyster Common Online Sales Platform a Grower's Godsend During COVID

Jon Pollak, Co-Founder and CEO,
The Oyster Common

The COVID-19 outbreak has posed unprecedented challenges, but in spite of them—or perhaps because of them—rapid innovation is occurring in shellfish distribution. Many growers are pursuing opportunities to build new relationships with customers by delivering to homes, collaborating with land farms to offer farm shares, and developing new sales opportunities with other local businesses who are innovating to continue to attract and retain customers during the public-health crisis.

If you are one of the many growers shifting to online sales, the Oyster Common can help. We offer an eCommerce platform with a sales site

for your customers to make purchases, back-office tools to help you manage your inventory and sales, and integrated FedEx delivery service. For local orders, you can also choose to deliver yourself and allow customers to pick up from your location.

Our goal is to empower growers with technology that helps them connect directly with their customers. We need partners who will use our platform and offer us feedback so that The Oyster Common can grow to become an industry standard.

Please visit our website oystercommon.com, follow us on social media to stay up to date, or reach out to me today at jon@oystercommon.com to schedule a demo.

To learn more about The Oyster Common, read the [article written by Heather Ketcham](#) on page 7 of the June 2019 ECSGA newsletter, found on the ECSGA's Newsletter Archives page.



JON POLLAK/THE OYSTER COMMON

The Oyster Common crew in happier times at the 2019 Billion Oyster Party in Red Hook, Brooklyn, N.Y. L to R: Designer David Antunes, Co-Founder and Chief Growth Officer Nick Pelletier, Co-Founder and CEO Jon Pollak, and Software Engineer Larry Laski.

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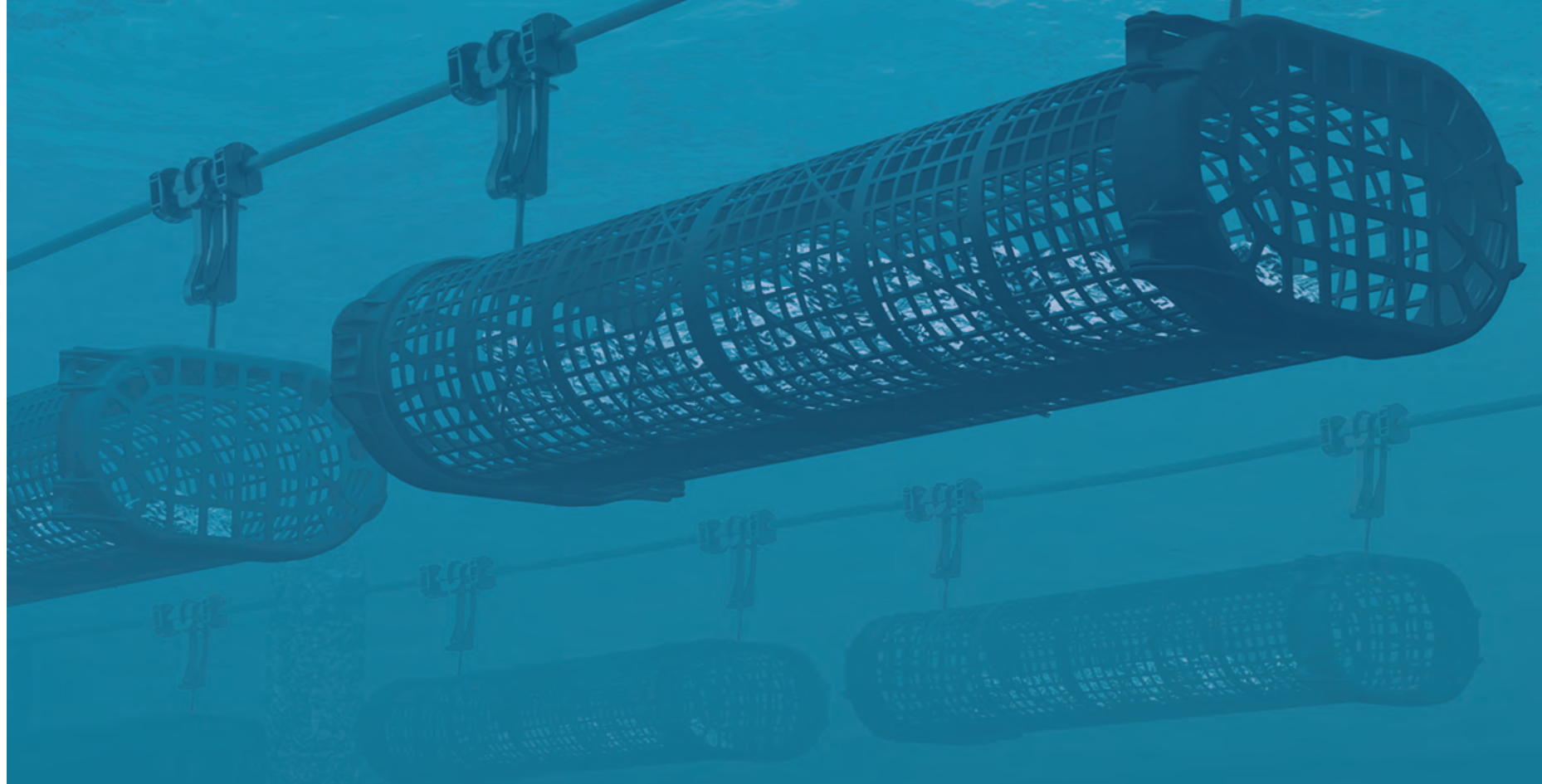
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