

EAST COAST SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION



The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association represents over 1,300 shellfish farmers from Maine to Florida and the Gulf states. 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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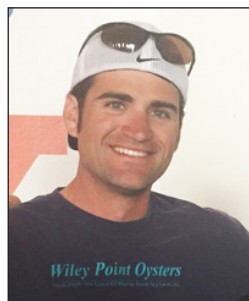
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From the President The Work Never Stops



President
Jeff Auger

As the snow melts and we wake from the dormant winter months, I wanted to check in before shellfish start growing, cages get fouled and seed needs to be thinned. As our fearless leader often says, it's important work that we do. The ECSGA has been able to successfully navigate COVID while continuing to provide leadership on genetics, new markets and

ensuring that our farms are protected from natural disasters through crop insurance (did you sign up for [ELAP](#) yet??!!).

As farmers we are so focused on battling weather conditions, mechanical breakdowns, or just trying to figure out how not to kill our entire crop, that many of these legislative and policy "wins" are missed. We are lucky to have an impressive board with representation from farms large and small, from Maine to the Gulf states, to help guide and focus our efforts. And in Bob we have one of the best weapons out there to help us with the continuous onslaught of regulatory and legislative measures that threaten our livelihood even more.

I wanted to thank Bob for all his hard work and

leadership, especially through these last few trying years. It is impressive to see the dedication he brings to the executive director position. He has masterfully taken the work ethic needed to run a successful farm and applied it to nurturing the ECSGA. Whether it is daily emails, hounding members or submitting public comments, I think we all agree that our industry would be worse off without him.

While it's nice to step back and look at what we have done, the work never stops. It seems as if aquaculture faces new attacks every month. The ECSGA has afforded me the opportunity to interact with many growers and owners along our coasts, and in every state the story is the same: with proper support and funding we can become the new face of the working waterfront for the East Coast.

We can bolster struggling communities by providing jobs that improve the environment through growing some of the healthiest protein available. We will be taking this message to Washington in a few weeks for our annual Walk on the Hill, where we will educate our elected officials and specifically be asking for more funding, greater access to programs for our farmers and help with accessing the working waterfront.

Thank you for your support. None of this work could continue without donations from farms, and we appreciate how hard that can be. A great friend of mine likes to say farming isn't a job, it's a lifestyle. We are going to keep working hard to ensure that your lifestyle is protected and can grow.

Free Mediation Services Resolve Lease Conflicts Without Lawyers

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

As every reader of this publication is no doubt aware, lease applications seem to be getting more and more contentious. Many factors are contributing to this trend, including the increasing popularity of more-visible floating gear, a growing population of recreational boaters and what seems to be a general trend of people just getting more cantankerous.

All these antagonistic interactions could benefit from an independent mediator who is trained in helping folks to cool down and see things from the opposing side. As it turns out,

the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers **FREE** or low-cost mediation services to farmers in 43 states. It is certainly cheaper than hiring a lawyer, and according to one grower I have spoken with, far more satisfying.

Rhode Island lease conflict

Jules Opton-Himmel started Walrus and Carpenter Oysters with leases in Rhode Island's Charlestown Pond in 2009. He has a year-round crew of three that swells to 11 in peak season. In 2016 Jules began the process of seeking a couple of new leases in Narragansett Bay where he could deploy floating gear.

His application for a 6-acre site was denied because of potential interactions with diving ducks and hunters, but a smaller 2-acre site nearby was approved for floating gear. Unfortunately, when waterfront homeowners noticed the gear they began to organize a campaign against



JULES OPTON-HIMMEL

A Rhode Island lease site set off a heated conflict over floating gear with nearby homeowners. Thanks to free USDA-funded mediation services, both sides worked together to find a solution that satisfied everyone.

the farm. The lease opponents felt that the state regulatory agency, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), had failed to provide adequate notice of the lease hearings, and contended that the picturesque views from their homes were being trashed by 2 acres of OysterGro® cages. When Jules

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Working Waterfront Access: A Critical Need

by Robert Rheault,
ECSGA Executive Director

One of our association's top legislative priorities this year in Washington, D.C., is to request assistance dealing with an issue that has been percolating for years. Growers in almost every state are finding it harder and harder to access their farms. It's a fundamental fact that if you can't access the water, you can't have a farm.

Up and down the coast we have seen marinas pushing out commercial boats in favor of recreational boaters. The marina where I used to dock my work boats went "docko-minium" a few years ago and it took a very expensive lawsuit to avoid getting booted. Many fish piers and commercial docks have been bought up and converted to condos.

The trend has been going on for years, but as with almost everything else, COVID accelerated it greatly. According to the National Marine Manufacturers Association, recreational boat sales surged 12% in 2020 (compared to a predicted 2%), and through

March 2021 sales were up 30% over 2020! Now most marinas are packed with giant yachts like never before. As slip fees climb it becomes more and more difficult for commercial boats to manage what recreational boaters seem more than willing to pay.

Even before the pandemic it was not ideal to trailer your boat to a public ramp, but now these facilities are jam-packed during the summer season. Many public ramps are built and maintained using federal funds collected through taxes on marine fuel and fishing tackle, with the express goal of enhancing recreational boating. In some states commer-



The steady erosion of working waterfronts has forced some shellfish growers to resort to crowded public boat ramps to access their farms. Not ideal. It can be frustrating, though entertaining, to be waiting in line behind a bunch of boneheads as they struggle to launch.

cial boats are being told they can't use these ramps. Most states recognize that public boat ramps are used by small-boat commercial fishermen and shellfishermen, so they continue to let shellfish farmers use them as well, but the congestion is getting severe. Parking is usually inadequate and the wait to use a ramp can be quite frustrating (even though watching the rookies try to launch their boats can be entertaining—for a good laugh check out YouTube boating fails).

Up in Maine wealthy investors are exerting intense pressure to sell precious commercial waterfront access points to develop the land for residential use. Once you lose these access points you will never be able to get them back. The state has a dedicated fund that they've used to buy some of these sites to ensure they remain open for commercial use, but waterfront real estate is in high demand so the pressure to sell can be enormous.

I know of five ECSGA members who ended up purchasing marinas in order to ensure that they could retain access to their farms (and I am sure there are others). Now they are saddled with a pile of debt and the additional challenge of managing a marina on top of their farm operations.

What are the solutions?

U.S. Representatives Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) and Rob Wittman (R-Va.) have been co-sponsoring the bipartisan Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act for several years now. The act would fund \$30 million a year in matching grants and loans to coastal states to help preserve and expand access to coastal waters for water-dependent businesses. Unfortunately, with 30 coastal states (including the Great Lakes) competing for funds, \$30

million will barely make a dent, and the act never has made it to the Senate for consideration. We will be raising awareness about this bill when we are in DC for our Walk on the Hill event.

NOAA keeps talking about building the "Blue Economy," which includes recreational boating and fishing, commercial fishing and aquaculture, shipping, and now, huge investments in wind power. To grow the Blue Economy we need the Department of Commerce to step up and make boating-access infrastructure investments in every state. Another idea would be to urge your state to mandate that each marina reserve a certain percentage of slips for commercial boats. Since marinas are all built in public trust waters, the states should be able to dictate to some extent how those waters are used. Ensuring access for commercial boats should be seen as a public benefit.

No access—no farms.



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Does Size Really Matter?

by Robert Rheault,
ECSCGA Executive Director

A question that's often raised in lease hearings on the East Coast is, "Just how big should a shellfish farm be?" I am often amazed that farms with five to 10 employees are disparaged as "factory farms" or "industrial aquaculture," while small farms run by owner-operators with family help and maybe an employee or two are held up as the preferred model. I laughed out loud when my farm was called the Walmart of aquaculture in Rhode Island after I hired my fifth employee many years ago. Let's take a look at the facts and examine the impacts of economies of scale to profitability in our industry.

Thankfully, we can use an excellent economic analysis conducted by Matt Parker for his thesis research at the University of Maryland. He examined oyster farms in Maryland that employ both bottom-grown, spat-on-shell methods and various types of "water-column leases" (using any type of gear, such as bottom cages, floating cages, rack-and-bag systems, longlines, etc.) Incorporating operational costs and sales data from local growers, Parker modeled the impacts of scale on the internal rate of return (IRR), net present value (NPV) of the farmer's investment, and the number of years needed to recoup the initial startup investment costs.

His findings show dramatic impacts of scale on profit for both types of farms, with larger farms showing lower break-even costs and higher profit margins. For the container-grown farming model Parker compared four different levels of production: 500,000, 1 million, 2 million and 2.5 million oysters harvested per year. At the lowest production level the model predicted that 90% of farms would have a negative IRR and a negative NPV after ten years! Most of these smaller farms did not hit the break-even point even after ten years. Doubling the farm size to a harvest of 1 million oysters per year resulted in a positive IRR and positive NPV, with a pay-back period of five to seven years. At higher production levels the results were similar.

Parker's model showed great sensitivity to price and mortality estimates, so small farms can still make it if they can command a high price. Farm size is clearly not the only factor determining whether you are making or losing money, but if you hold price constant, the impact of scale on profit is quite clear. So why are many states restricting lease size, and why are we romanticizing the small farm, when a farm with a few employees and twice the production level has a much better chance of being profitable?

Years ago, I saw this dynamic at play on my own farm. Once we hit a certain level of production, we finally started to see black numbers on the bottom line. It also meant that we were able to invest in labor-saving tools like tumblers and cranes that reduced some of the backbreaking work involved. At scale I was able to provide health insurance for my workers and pay them a living wage. We were able to afford to do the marketing work necessary to find new customers and keep prices up, and my firm was more resilient after the inevitable bad production year because banks were no longer afraid to lend me money.

Recently I had a chance to speak with Parker about farm scale in depth, and he stressed the impact of labor costs. In the model he

developed, every size operation used hired labor (hiring data was collected by Karen Hudson at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in her annual "Situation and Outlook Report"). Parker noted that "small" farms often are able to get away with taking advantage of unpaid family labor—or even more often, the owners destroying their own bodies by doing all the labor themselves—so the farm can be profitable. These small farmers share a vision that they will make some money and then expand and really bring in the big bucks.

Unfortunately, when farms expand they need to hire employees because the workload is too much for their unpaid family labor or

— Continued on page 8

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— Continued from page 1

Mediation a Win-Win

tried to apply for a lease modification to add a few strings of kelp, the homeowners broke out the pitchforks and torches. There was some confusion about how many cages had been permitted on the site, and things started to get really ugly as the homeowners began to lawyer up and toss around accusations of bad regulations and criminal capitalism.

When Jules hired a lawyer the CRMC was forced to bring its own lawyers into the fray. Things were spiraling down fast when Jules learned about a group called the Rhode Island Agricultural Mediation Program, which provides free mediation services to farmers. He asked them to intervene, and after both sides agreed to leave their lawyers at home a meeting was set up.

Everyone went into the meeting expecting the worst. Nobody shook hands or even made eye contact as each side presented their views, and the mediator tried to ensure that personal attacks were avoided. It took several, two- to three-hour sessions, but slowly the level of acrimony came down. Everyone was forced to listen to what the others had to say, and while the two sides didn't agree on everything, they were able to negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise. Each side recognized that they had lots of misunderstandings about the other, and they stopped hating on each other and started working on solutions. The homeowners who participated eventually were able to bring along others in the community who had also become wrapped up in the fight.

The homeowners came to recognize that much of their beef was actually about the process—they felt that they had not been given adequate notice and that their voices were not being heard. So they asked that representatives from the CRMC attend the next meeting to allow them to vent about the process.

Eventually everyone felt heard, and the two sides negotiated a solution that involved moving the farm a half-mile to the north. Jules was able to get a larger lease at the new location, achieving the full buildout he

had initially envisioned. Now the homeowners say hello when they see him and call him up if they have any concerns. Jules has a new-found respect for the folks he had once written off.

The process may not have been fast, but then contentious lease applications never move quickly. State Aquaculture Coordinator Dave Beutel was pleased that the two sides were able to break the impasse because he stopped getting weekly calls from irate homeowners. He noted that the process toned down the level of animosity and forced the two sides to listen to each other. The CRMC is now modifying its protocols for notifying abutters, and the outcome looks like a win-win for all involved.

All this came as a big surprise to me. I had never heard of this free service, and it seems like a marvelous opportunity for growers to explore before involving lawyers and letting things get really ugly and expensive. I wish I had known about mediation when I was struggling to get a lease, before 600 letters of objection landed in my file!

Visit agriculturemediation.org for more info about low- or no-cost USDA-funded mediation services for farmers.

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Cell Size: (10-20) (micron)

Nannochloropsis gaditana

Avg. Density: (100-200) (million cell/mL)

Cell Size: (3-5) (micron)

2019 Virginia Seafood Economic Impact Study Released

Researchers at Virginia Tech recently completed an analysis of the economic impact of the seafood sector in Virginia. The study looked at contributions

from in-state commercial and recreational fishing, aquaculture, processing and distribution, but did not include retail and restaurant sales. It focused on estimating the overall direct, indirect, and induced effects of the Virginia seafood industry in 2019.

As the third-largest seafood producer in the U.S., Virginia seafood landings accounted for



"This is an industry we want to save for future generations."
Greg Silkes, American Mussel Harvesters
North Kingstown, Rhode Island

Help us protect the shellfish we love and the waters that sustain them at nature.org/shellfish4climate

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE VIRGINIA SEAFOOD INDUSTRY IN 2019: \$1.1 BILLION					
Economic effects in the state of Virginia only. Retail and restaurant services are not included.					
	WATERMEN	AQUACULTURE	PROCESSORS	DISTRIBUTORS	TOTALS
Employment	1,969	1,367	2,570	1,281	7,187
Direct effects	1,743	1,073	2,089	1,145	6,050
Indirect effects	101	161	210	51	523
Induced effects	125	133	271	85	614
Labor income	\$34,313,744	\$36,441,948	\$74,174,637	\$23,189,800	\$168,120,129
Direct effects	\$21,010,110	\$17,836,629	\$45,348,506	\$15,515,125	\$99,711,370
Indirect effects	\$7,124,609	\$12,029,561	\$15,466,851	\$3,496,137	\$38,117,158
Induced effects	\$6,179,025	\$6,575,758	\$13,358,280	\$4,178,538	\$30,291,601
Value added	\$113,682,985	\$94,084,161	\$177,904,164	\$42,333,871	\$428,005,182
Direct effects	\$90,508,386	\$61,516,724	\$127,758,567	\$29,469,935	\$309,253,612
Indirect effects	\$11,120,857	\$18,743,479	\$24,087,262	\$4,713,381	\$58,664,979
Induced effects	\$12,053,743	\$12,823,958	\$26,058,335	\$8,150,555	\$59,086,591
Output	\$226,282,561	\$177,200,126	\$592,764,852	\$108,620,531	\$1,104,868,070
Direct effects	\$184,268,786	\$119,657,312	\$497,769,653	\$86,054,955	\$987,750,706
Indirect effects	\$21,720,513	\$35,951,827	\$51,124,196	\$8,843,384	\$117,639,920
Induced effects	\$20,293,262	\$21,590,987	\$43,871,003	\$13,722,192	\$99,477,444
Tax revenue	\$5,153,434	\$7,614,467	\$10,749,280	\$2,928,208	\$26,445,389
Local tax*	\$1,223,269	\$1,976,523	\$2,391,161	\$686,679	\$6,287,632
State tax	\$1,013,845	\$1,557,919	\$2,064,370	\$579,463	\$5,215,597
Federal tax	\$2,916,320	\$4,080,025	\$6,293,750	\$1,652,066	\$14,942,160

*Includes sub-county general, sub-county special districts, and county level

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VIRGINIA TECH/VIRGINIA MARINE PRODUCTS BOARD
To view this graphic online, visit www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/AAEC/aaec-302/AAEC-302.pdf

nearly 393.1 million pounds, with a dockside value of over \$184.2 million. Similarly, the Virginia aquaculture industry continued to grow, with 191 farms accounting for \$112.6 million in total sales (not including seed).

Virginia is the largest producer of hard clams nationwide, and the largest producer of oysters

on the East Coast, which includes wild harvest and spat-on-shell.

Virginia seafood industry by the numbers

- ❑ \$1.1 billion in total economic output, supporting 7,187 jobs: 6,050 direct jobs, 523 indirect jobs, 614 induced jobs;
- ❑ \$177 million in economic output from aquaculture (16% of total), supporting 1,367 jobs (19% of total): 1,073 direct jobs, 161 indirect jobs, 133 induced jobs; and
- ❑ over \$26 million in tax revenue generated, \$7.6 million of which was from aquaculture, and \$5.2 million from wild harvest fisheries.

The Virginia seafood industry supports a wide variety of other economic sectors, including: boat building, sporting goods manufacturing, commercial and industrial machinery, and equipment repair and maintenance through direct expenditures by seafood businesses.

Wages and salaries ripple through the Virginia economy, multiplying the impact of the seafood industry.

—RBR

To read the full report, visit www.virginiaseafood.org/2023/01/09/virginia-seafood-economic-impact-study

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Rutgers Holds 1st Shellfish Research Symposium

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.—The inaugural Rutgers Shellfish Research Symposium, in partnership with the New Jersey Aquaculture Association and the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, was held on January 18 at the NJAES Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The symposium gave more than 45 New Jersey shellfish growers, resource managers, grant funders, students and conservation groups a chance to connect directly with researchers studying aquaculture and shellfish ecology in the state.

The event featured 20 lightning talks followed by four break-out groups where growers and researchers were able to share, in a small setting, their thoughts on emerging research priorities, fostering the creation of future directions and collaborations.



RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Key priorities included potential bird impacts on floating gear, advances in shellfish culture for habitat restoration, genetics to improve survival of hard clams, and future workforce development.

The symposium was organized by Michael DeLuca, director of the Rutgers Aquaculture Innovation Center, and Michael Acquafredda, (GSNB'19) a Rutgers graduate of the doctoral program in Ecology and Evolution, who currently serves as a postdoctoral research associate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Diana Burich, director of education at the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium, expressed her thanks at being included in the inaugural event bringing together the various constituencies that actively support, facilitate

and fund shellfish research in the state.

“I was pleased to be able to share the Apprenticeship for Shellfish Aquaculture Program with the group. It seems like folks were interested as well. A win-win for all,” she said.

Kyle Gronostajski, environmental director of Jetty Rock Foundation, a local non-profit devoted to the protection of the oceans and waterways, also expressed his appreciation to the organizers for the collaborative experience.

“I want to thank Michael DeLuca and Michael Acquafredda for the symposium. Super informative and great to network with the aquaculture community at large in New Jersey,” he noted.

—Rutgers University



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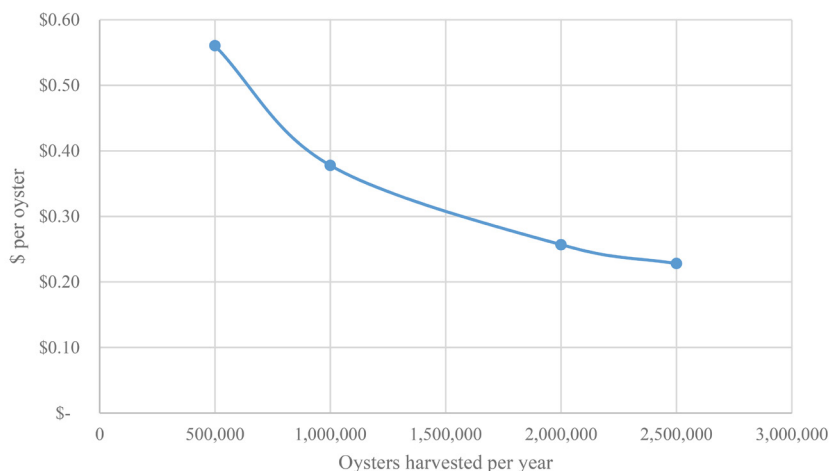
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— Continued from page 3
Does Size Matter?

the owners to handle themselves. They've entered into what Parker calls the "dead zone." (Apparently he's been reading Stephen King lately). These small farms make a profit, but when they grow to a certain point they **HAVE** to pay for labor in order to bring in the harvest and get the oysters to market. This increases their cost of production and reduces profit, often resulting in a negative bottom line.

If the grower can secure a line of credit and grow in scale to the point of true profitability, the farm can often survive, but getting over the hump is never easy. It is really impossible to know exactly where the "dead zone" starts and ends for any given operation. Price, mortality rates and labor costs will make a huge difference on the contours of the zone. Parker has recently developed an online tool where you can plug in your own inputs and predict where you are on the profit/loss curve and what your farm might be able to do

Break-Even Price for Self-Financed Water Column Operations Without Nutrient Payments in the Maryland Chesapeake Bay



According to Matt Parker's model, smaller farms (harvesting fewer than 600,000 oysters a year) need to demand a much higher price to reach the break-even point than larger-sized farms do.

with increases in scale. Visit the UMD [Aquaculture Business Planning and Management](#)¹ web page, where you can also view webinars on Aquaculture Business Planning and how to use the tool.

Although I often hear it said that large farms hinder the development of small farms, I have yet to see this happen. Even in states with multi-million-dollar farms, we continue to see a steady influx of new growers trying to get started on a shoestring budget like I did. I would argue that the large farms actually help the small farms in getting estab-

lished because they can afford to do the research that advances the industry, and they support the associations that push for workable regulations.

While small firms can survive by not paying their family members, the larger firms typically need to have a well-paid manager overseeing salaried employees. Larger firms have to properly insure their employees and often offer employee benefits to retain skilled workers. Larger firms can afford to invest in equipment that improves product quality, such as walk-in coolers, refrigerated trucks and ice machines. And because they have more to lose, they are often less likely to cut corners on regulations.

I firmly believe that a farm producing 1-2 million oysters with five or 10 employees is a "small" farm. This level of production can be reached on 10-20 acres and takes up a tiny fraction of coastal waters. Capping lease sizes at a few acres will consign growers to eking out a living doing back-breaking manual labor, while reducing the odds that they will ever be able to achieve profitability. This kind of social engineering would never be tolerated in any other industry, much less an environmentally beneficial food production system like shellfish farming. For another take on this subject see the article on page 7 of our [December 2019 newsletter](#).

Notes

1. extension.umd.edu/programs/agriculture-food-systems/program-areas/animal-science/aquaculture/aquaculture-business-planning-and-management

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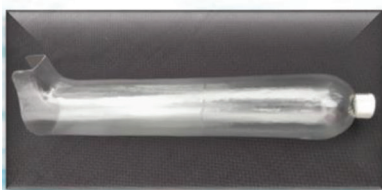
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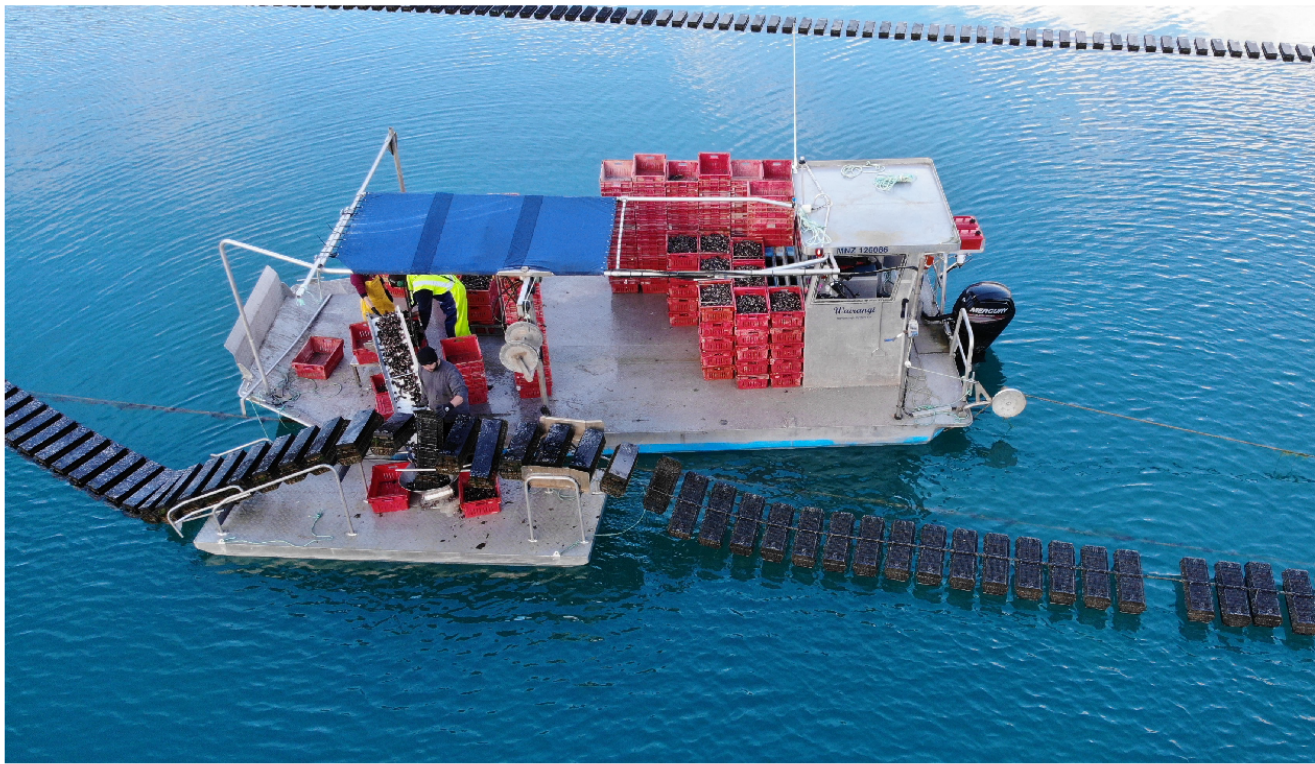
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Do Shellfish Farms Impact Property Values?

by Robert Rheault,
ECSCGA Executive Director

A common complaint at public hearings for proposed shellfish farms is that they will impair pristine views and damage property values for waterfront homes in the area. I have heard this assertion dozens of times at hearings for my own lease applications and those of others.

Meanwhile, I have watched the property values of waterfront homes in the vicinity of leases in Point Judith Pond in Rhode

Island skyrocket in the 35 years since I first started working there. I am happy to take credit for the boost in valuations, but as a scientist I know that correlation does not prove causation.

All joking aside, I continue to hear the argument and have not seen much published to support or refute it. One publication on this subject is the doctoral work of Pratheesh Sudhakaran of the University of Rhode Island, "[Do oyster farms actually reduce the property values? Empirical evidence from Rhode Island](#),"¹ published in 2021 in *Aquaculture Economics & Management*. The authors used a hedonic price theory model to look at the relation between price trends and proximity to shellfish farms.



STEVE HELBER/AP

Oyster cages visible at low tide in Virginia Beach in the sightline of waterfront homeowners. A common argument at lease hearings is that the presence of farms is unsightly and will lower property values.

They state that, "Using economic theory, a cost-benefit analysis of oyster farming operations can be conducted by quantifying the negative externality from aquaculture operations on nearby properties. After controlling for general housing price trends, analyzing the difference in housing value before and after the construction of [an] aquaculture farm will give a good indication of the cost of the negative externality."

The authors found that, "**the houses located in the distance bands 0-0.75 km and 0.75-1.0 km showed an increase in their value after the construction and operation of the oyster farm by 8% and 13% respectively.** On the other hand, houses located in 1.25-1.5 km distance from the oyster farm had a significant 10% decrease in their value..." I have to wonder how houses closer to the farms were affected less than those further away, and if this is an artifact of sample size or a real impact.

The authors also concluded that, "the value of luxury houses was adversely affected by either the lease announcement or the presence of oyster farms, depending on the proximity to coastline."

I found it odd that two statements Sudhakaran made in his PhD dissertation were absent from the published paper. That "no statistical evidence to prove that the value of housing property adjacent to the farms (within 0-0.75 km) in aquaculture developed cities decreased after the construction of farms," and "the construction of oyster farms reduced the value of larger properties, but the effect is

insignificant in general."

As is so often the case, proponents and detractors of aquaculture will each find points to cherry pick from this work. Another study, by Katherine Alice Stump for her Masters thesis at Virginia Tech, is titled, "[Impact of Oyster Aquaculture in Virginia on Waterfront Property Values](#)"². Stump also used a hedonic property value model, and looked at "the effect of oyster aquaculture on waterfront properties by using 2,245 property sales from 16 counties and independent cities, along with information on aquaculture activity from 2012-2016. **The results suggest that oyster aquaculture has a positive effect on waterfront property values, but a negative effect when using cage equipment.**"

My own theory on the subject is that as aquaculture becomes more commonplace, communities will grow more accepting of it. As difficult as it is to overcome the attitude that anything new and different must be resisted and should probably be illegal, we can take comfort in the fact that perceptions do change over generations. As shellfish farms become more commonplace and their economic impacts become more entwined in the fabric of the community, people will eventually grow to accept it, and the impacts of shellfish farms on property values will diminish.

Notes

1. doi.org/10.1080/13657305.2020.1869857
2. [vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/91893](https://techworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/91893)

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A free, comprehensive “soup-to-nuts” training program designed to cover everything from knots to boating safety to food safety to marketing is now available online. These video training modules were designed to teach entry-level farm workers the skills and knowledge they need to be successful, and were originally paired with a hands-on, paid internship program offered by the Education Exchange in Rhode Island. (You can read all about it in our [June 2022 newsletter](#).)

But now anyone can access the modules in two ways: as a certificate program, which requires going through the modules in order and taking a test before being able to access the next module; or just jumping around and selecting any modules in any order without receiving a certificate.



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To access the videos, visit [the-education-exchange1.teachable.com](#). You will be asked to sign up for a free teachables account, or to log in to teachables if you already have an account. Once you are logged in, you should see two widgets: Aquaculture Jobs Training Program Entry-Level Oyster Farm Worker (Certificate Available); and Aquaculture Jobs Training Program Entry-Level Oyster Farm Worker Resource Page (NO CERTIFICATE).

Ed note: I had trouble getting the modules to play using Firefox, but there may have been conflicts with ad blockers and other add-ons and extensions I use in that browser. The modules played fine when I switched to a bare-bones version of Chrome.

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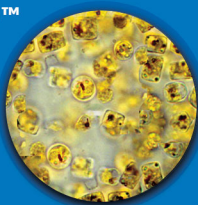
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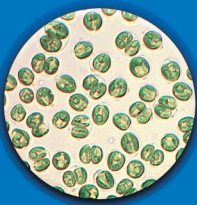
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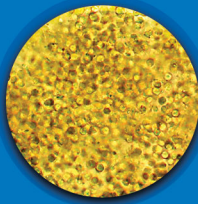



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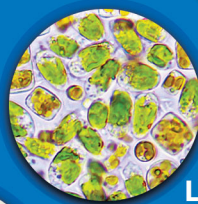
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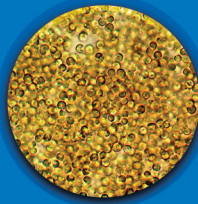
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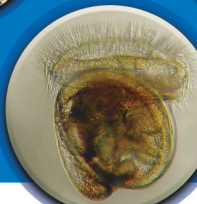
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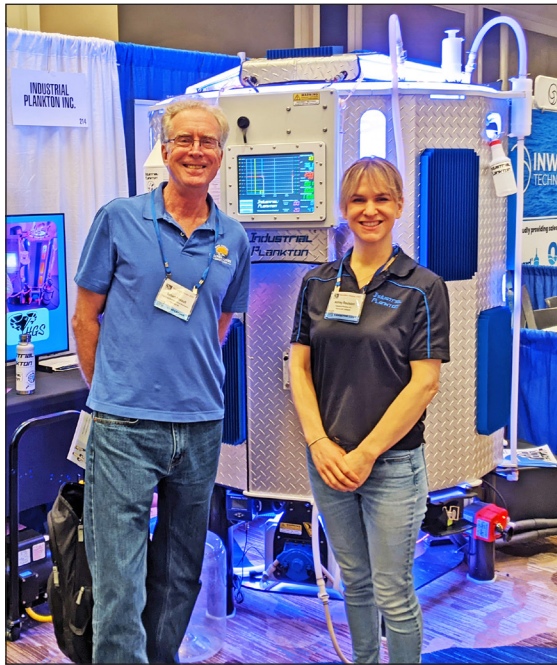
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Vitsab International AB was one of ECSGA’s longtime supporters with a booth at the Boston Seafood Show. Shown left to right are Executive Vice President Jeff Desrosiers, and Director, Business Development Mark Winowich. Vitsab makes Freshtag™ TTIs (time temperature indicators), calibrated to mirror bacterial growth, align with temperature-monitoring regulations, or match user-defined temperature profiles. Using easy-to-understand “Stoplight Technology” Freshtag™ labels stay green for most of their life; then eventually change to yellow, and then red, like a stop light, if temperature abuse is detected.



Ashley Roulston (r), in charge of Global Business Development and a co-founder of Industrial Plankton Inc., is pictured with ECSGA Executive Director Bob Rheault on the show floor. The company has been an ECSGA supporter for three years, and is a global leader in technology for high-density algae production for shellfish hatcheries. Many of the glowing bioreactors have been given nicknames by their owners, such as “R2-D2” and more recently, “Weird Al Plankovic” on Nantucket. In a nod to the homage, Weird Al tweeted, “ It’s a lifelong dream come true – I FINALLY have a bioreactor named after me.”

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Abra-clam Lincoln Takes U.S. by Storm

Florida man Blaine Parker hit paydirt over President’s Day weekend when he dug up a giant southern quahog in the Gulf Coast waters off Alligator Point south of Tallahassee while looking for clams to make chowder. By counting its outer growth rings, Parker estimated that the monster mollusk was likely spawned in the same year that President Abraham Lincoln was born, so naturally he named it “Abra-clam Lincoln.”

The hefty hog measured 6 inches across and tipped the scales at 2.6 pounds, which Parker noted was big enough to make two servings of chowder, using the shells as serving bowls.

“We were just going to eat it, but we thought about it a while and figured it was probably pretty special. So, we didn’t want to kill it,” said Parker. So he brought it to the aquarium



ALICIA DEVINE/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

at the Gulf Specimen Marine Lab, where he works as an Americorps specimen collector. Abe was getting around 100 visitors a day during his time at the lab, and just about every media outlet in the country picked up the story and ran with it.

Parker released Abe back into the Gulf of Mexico later that same week.



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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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