

CALIFORNIA SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

A Strategy to Enhance the Marine Environment and Economy of Key Coastal Communities



TOMALES BAY Photo: Katherine Williams, Pelican Studio

The California Shellfish Initiative is a collaborative effort to restore and expand California's shellfish resources.

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The Initiative will harness the creative talents of shellfish growers, local, state, and federal resource managers and environmental leaders. The Initiative's goals are to protect and enhance our marine habitats, foster environmental quality, increase jobs, improve agency coordination and communication, and strengthen coastal economies. A successful Initiative will engage coastal stakeholders in a comprehensive planning process to restore shellfish populations, grow California's \$25M sustainable shellfish harvest, protect clean water and enhance healthy watersheds.

Photo: Ed Anderson Photography



OYSTER HARVEST ON TOMALES BAY
RAUL VALENZUELA &
ERIK SCHLAGENHAUF

THE CHALLENGE

California has an enormous opportunity to create living-wage jobs in coastal communities, improve water quality and restore important ecosystem functions through expansion of sustainable shellfish farming and habitat restoration. Realizing this vision will require coordinated planning among all stakeholders to attain the full environmental and economic benefits.

Public demand for local shellfish has risen dramatically in recent decades. Yet, supply has lagged far behind, contributing to a state and national seafood trade deficit and a lost opportunity for economic growth. Shellfish mariculture is a



above: STEAMERS!

below: FARMER INSPECTING THE OYSTER BEDS



multi-billion dollar global industry. With substantial intertidal and offshore ocean areas ideal for cultivation, our state’s shellfish industry could supply a substantial local and export market.

Coastal estuaries are among California’s most important, productive and sensitive natural resources. Shellfish provide critical ecosystem functions that support coastal ecology. However, efforts to increase harvest, restore diminished shellfish habitats and improve water quality require complex and costly planning among many local, state, and federal agencies.

THE SOLUTION

The California Shellfish Initiative will build upon successful collaborations from other states, lessons from the recent marine planning processes and an innovative Humboldt Bay community planning project now underway. The Initiative intends to improve regional planning and permitting efficiencies for shellfish aquaculture while creating strong performance standards to:

- **Provide an open process for community leaders to engage in coastal resource planning**
- **Enhance shellfish production and habitat restoration by developing a more comprehensive, efficient, and economical permit process with increased agency coordination**
- **Ensure clean and healthy estuaries to protect existing shellfish beds and access to additional acreage to shellfish farming and restoration**

BENEFITS

The California Shellfish Initiative benefits include:

- **Sustainable, healthy, and locally produced seafood**
- **New “Blue Jobs” and small business opportunities in coastal communities**
- **Increased and improved habitat and water quality for environmental commercial, and recreational uses and listed species**
- **Shoreline protection and stabilization**

SHARED VALUES

California’s coastal and estuarine waters are a rare and magnificent ecological and community resource. They are among the most productive ecosystems on earth, providing nursery grounds for most ocean fisheries and essential habitat and forage area for a great diversity of birds and other wildlife. The great public value placed on this resource is reflected by the number of local, state and federal agencies that share a role in its protection and management.

These waters are also the only place where shellfish aquaculture can exist. While we are the third largest shellfish consuming state in the U.S., California’s production meets less than half of this demand. California could lead the nation to meet an ever growing shellfish demand while creating environmentally sustainable “Blue Jobs” along our coast.

THE CALIFORNIA SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

The Initiative is a collaborative effort to enhance shellfish resources, protect and restore ecological functions, and create sustainable jobs in vulnerable coastal communities. It builds on NOAA's National Shellfish Initiative and Marine Aquaculture Policy, established to meet global seafood demand and maintain healthy ecosystems. Shellfish farmers seek a thoughtful dialogue with local, state and federal leaders to produce a visionary California shellfish policy. Through this Initiative we suggest three areas for dialogue, cooperation and action:



THREE SUGGESTED ACTIONS

1. POLICY - A dialogue between industry, environmental, and agency leaders to create a comprehensive, efficient and economical permitting process for both shellfish restoration and commercial farming.

2. LOCAL PLANS - Conduct community based and stakeholder driven planning at three estuaries – Humboldt, Tomales and Morro Bay, which comprise about 90% of California's current shellfish production.

Accelerate local restoration plans, like the 50-year Subtidal Conservation Plan to restore 8,000 acres of San Francisco Bay shellfish habitat. This effort by the S.F Estuary Partnership, Coastal Conservancy and other leaders, will restore oyster reefs to protect shorelines in the face of climate change and sea level rise.

3. STATE PLANS - Utilize the state's Geoportals and other state-of-the-art tools to involve the public and evaluate the opportunities and challenges for new shellfish operations along California's coastal and offshore ocean waters.



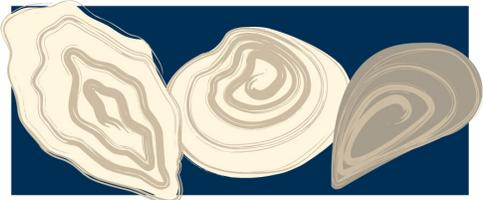
Source: "Subtidal Habitat Goals Project, CA Coastal Conservancy 2010"

The CA Coastal Conservancy and partners have identified 8,000 acres in S.F. Bay in a 50-year shellfish restoration plan to buffer tidal wetlands and strengthen habitat resiliency for climate change adaptation.



For more information on the California Shellfish Initiative, go to the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association at: <http://pcsga.net/california-shellfish-initiative>

PCSGA



PACIFIC COAST SHELLFISH GROWERS ASSOCIATION