The Napa Valley of Oysters

Launching a North Carolina Shellfish Initiative

With millions of acres of coastal waters, North Carolina recognizes the importance of shellfish to its economy, cultural heritage and environmental health. The state is on its way to becoming the Napa Valley of Oysters. The state is launching the North Carolina Shellfish Initiative to galvanize the support of local, state and federal leadership in promoting sustainable seafood, shellfish restoration and clean water.

The North Carolina Shellfish Initiative will advance the following four goals:

GOAL: CREATE JOBS

The Initiative will help create new jobs in North Carolina's coastal communities while protecting and restoring the coastal environment. The Initiative will:

- Develop and provide training programs to help build a knowledgeable and successful mariculture workforce

- Foster sustainable mariculture industry growth through continued extension and outreach, applied research, technology transfer and policy development

- Research and share cost-effective and cutting-edge techniques for mariculture and restoration operations by reporting on the economic and ecological benefits

- Leverage state and federal funds, matched with private funds and cost share programs, to increase the economic and ecological benefits

SHELLFISH AQUACULTURE
$3.9 million farmgate value in 2017

GOAL: PROTECT WATER QUALITY

The Initiative will protect and restore water quality to allow natural reefs to thrive and mariculture to grow. This effort will:

- Create and implement watershed management plans to protect water quality in priority watersheds

- Build oyster habitat through oyster sanctuaries and cultch planting efforts

- Expand shellfish mapping and water quality monitoring efforts to maintain water quality standards for both shellfish and human health

- Forge public-private partnerships to fund the implementation of water quality improvement and habitat restoration activities

For every **$1** invested in oyster restoration activities, NC receives **$4.05** in benefits

GOAL: PROTECT SHELLFISH HEALTH

The Initiative supports the establishment of a shellfish pathology program to ensure healthy wild and farmed shellfish populations and to support the existing state shellfish research hatchery. This goal aims to:

- Secure support and funding for an in-state shellfish pathology program

- Develop North Carolina oysters that are resistant to disease, fast-growing and acclimated to the local environment

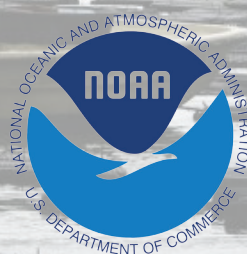## GOAL: ENSURE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

The Initiative will safeguard industry growth and ensure siting is guided by a thorough regulatory framework to maximize environmental and economic returns while protecting public trust rights. This work will:

- Determine the appropriate size and distribution of oyster sanctuaries and cultch plantings through modeling, mapping, monitoring and adaptive management

- Evaluate the effectiveness of Shellfish Enterprise Areas — areas pre-approved for shellfish mariculture to streamline the siting and permitting process

- Provide guidance to ensure the permit process is effective, consistent and efficient

- Minimize user conflicts by working with local, state and federal leadership to develop strategies for managing mariculture in concert with public trust activities

- Increase public participation, engagement and understanding of the importance of shellfish in North Carolina, including funding for public education and outreach

1 acre
of oyster reef can provide habitat for
1.5 tons
of seafood per year

Since 2003, a diverse group of stakeholders has worked to make statewide advances in promoting restoration, mariculture and protection of oysters in North Carolina through a collaboration known as the **Oyster Restoration and Protection Plan for North Carolina: A Blueprint for Action**. *By launching the North Carolina Shellfish Initiative, these partners confirm their commitment to realizing the goals outlined above.*

Learn more at **ncoysters.org.**

Photo: Daniel Pullen

NORTH CAROLINA MARINE FISHERIES

DEQ
NORTH CAROLINA
Department of Environmental Quality

Sea Grant
North Carolina

North Carolina
Coastal Federation
www.nccoast.org

NOAA
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

NCSGA
North Carolina Shellfish Growers Association