

# **THE MASSACHUSETTS SHELLFISH INITIATIVE**

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***Background, Overview, Task Force  
Charge, Timeline and Desired  
Outcome***

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# **Task Force Member Introductions**

# Meeting Agenda

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- I. Background**
- II. Task Force impetus**
- III. Proposed Strategy**
- IV. DMF - SRP Request**
- V. Discussion**
- VI. Meeting frequency/schedule**
- VII. Adjourn**





# NATIONAL SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

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Voluntary national initiative introduced in 2011 to **increase populations of bivalve shellfish in our nation's coastal waters**—including oysters, clams, abalone, and mussels—through both sustainable commercial production and restoration activities.

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***MSI Goal:***

*Maximize the economic, environmental,  
and social benefits of Massachusetts'  
near shore shellfish resources*



# INITIAL SCOPING AND SURVEY

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Initial project partners: Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, Massachusetts Aquaculture Association, The Nature Conservancy and UMass Boston surveyed shellfish stakeholders in 2017 to identify issues, concerns, interests, and commonalities, and to confirm broad support for the concept.

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7 Statewide Outreach Meetings  
389 Total Participants

# **More than half of participants surveyed believe that a grassroots approach to creating a state-wide plan has the potential to:**

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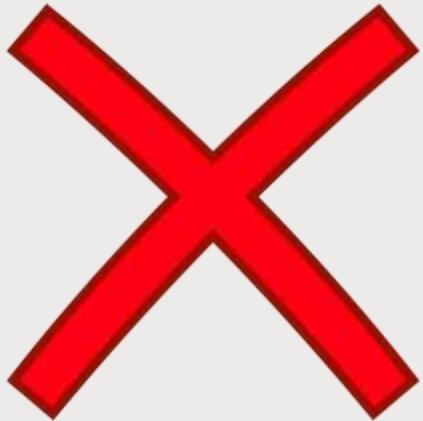
- Increase shellfish resources in the Commonwealth.
- Raise visibility and ‘status’ of shellfish for the broad benefits they contribute
- Increase credibility, cooperation, communication and coordination among stakeholders
- Leverage support from other sectors
- Update and provide for comprehensive management for shellfish resources

# What MSI is and what MSI isn't...



**YES:** Near shore State and Municipal regulated shellfish resources and resource areas wild harvest and aquaculture.

- e.g. Oysters, Hard Clam (Quahogs), Softshell Clam (Steamers), Mussels, Bay Scallop, Razor Clam, etc



**NO:** Off shore Federal and State regulated shellfish resources

- e.g. Sea Scallop, Ocean Clam

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# THE MSI:

Targeting two outcomes:

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## 1. Build capacity for shellfish

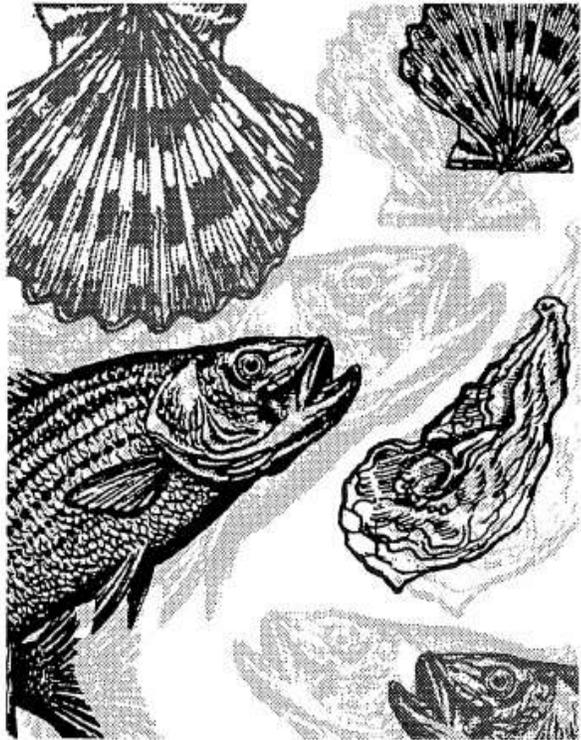
- Increase stakeholder participation in management and community planning
- Improve stakeholder information sharing and collaboration among resource user groups

## 2. Develop a strategic state-wide plan and guidance

**document** for how the state and towns can balance growing demands for shellfish resources, including strategies and tactics that can be implemented in the first 5 years to make progress towards the MSI goal.

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# Aquaculture White Paper & Strategic Plan



S e p t e m b e r 1 9 9 5

## NEED FOR A MASSACHUSETTS SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

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- Massachusetts lacks an updated common vision or goals for the state's shellfish resources
  - Last effort was a multi-year, state agency lead aquaculture-specific plan in **1995**
  - MSI is a first comprehensive effort focused on near shore shellfish resources.
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**We're not alone...**



# **CALIFORNIA** **SHELLFISH INITIATIVE**

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## **Successes:**

- Group convened to address streamlining permitting
- Establishment of Working Group and Steering Committee
- Emphasis on bolstering outreach and marketing

## **Take-Aways:**

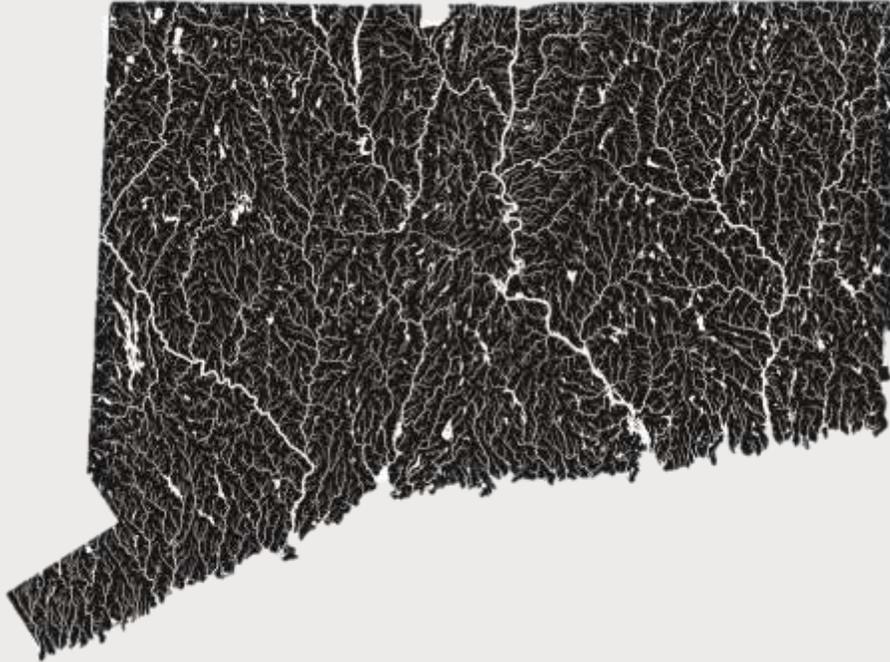
- Sustaining Momentum is Vital
- Consensus Building

**Current Status:** Working Groups

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# CONNECTICUT SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

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## **Successes:**

- Public Scoping Sessions with 150+ participants
- Establishment of Steering Committee and Project Team
- CSI currently open to public comment

## **Take-Aways:**

- Goal Setting
- CSI Framework

**Current Status:** Implementation Planning Stage

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# WASHINGTON

# SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

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## **Successes:**

- Blue Ribbon Panel on Ocean Acidification
- Increase Acreage
- Clean Vessel Program
- Native Shellfish Restoration Hatchery

## **Take-Aways:**

- Working Groups
- Implementation

**Current Status:** Phase II Implementation

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# RHODE ISLAND

# SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

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## **Successes:**

- Building on previous efforts in RI under Rhode Island Shellfish Management Plan
- Strong Public Engagement

## **Take-Aways:**

- Online Webinars
- Public Events & Tours
- Food, Jobs, Management

**Current Status:** Implementation

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# ALASKA

# MARICULTURE

# DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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## **Successes:**

- \$100 million industry by 2038
- Task Force extended through 2021
- Mariculture revolving Loan Fund

## **Take-Aways:**

- “If we’re all working together, success takes care of itself” ~ *Henry Ford*
- Broad marine shellfish aquaculture - AK specific

**Current Status:** Implementation

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# WHY NOW for MA?



- Increased frequency in closures
  - Norovirus
  - Vibrio
  - Harmful algal blooms
- Growing perception of wild harvesters vs. aquaculturists vs. restoration
- Complex permitting (MAPP and SRP)
- Regulatory consistency associated with our “Commonwealth” status
- Opportunity for legislative initiatives (e.g. AQUAA Act, Act relative to shellfish reefs and water quality)

# WHY NOW?

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- Many towns have a wait list for residents interested in receiving a lease to start an aquaculture business.
  - 2016 Cape Cod towns survey showed a wait list of 178 people (total number of private licenses reported at the time: 278)
- Towns around the Commonwealth are turning to shellfish to clean up estuaries and mitigate nitrogen problems. (e.g. Cape Cod Commission developed and drafted the 208 Plan Update)





# WHY NOW?

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- 3,000 commercial harvest permits annually.
  - Increasing recreational and commercial harvest permits.
  - Restoration advocates are actively increasing the amount of restored oyster reefs
  - Significant growth in shellfish resources
    - 2006 : \$6 million**
    - 2017: \$28 million**
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# Task Force Composition – *Why You?*

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- YOU represent government and non-government agencies and organizations
- YOU represent recreational and commercial wild shellfish harvesting interests
- YOU represent environmental and ecosystem restoration interests
- YOU represent commercial and municipal shellfish farming interests
- **YOU REPRESENT THE RANGE OF INTERESTS ASSOCIATED WITH SHELLFISH IN MASSACHUSETTS**
- **YOUR PARTICIPATION ENABLES IMPLEMENTATION AND LASTING IMPACT**

# **PROPOSED STRATEGY**

**Note: *In the interest of time, strategy and process are proposed.***

***Ultimate strategy and process are at Task Force discretion.***

# MSI TASK FORCE RESPONSIBILITIES

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- Meet up to five times in 12 months
- Identify, Appoint and Oversee Sub-Committees
- Fulfill Community Advisory Committee responsibilities for SRP and regulatory changes after public comment
- Communicate with stakeholders to ensure equitable representation
- Utilize networks and relationships to advance initiative goals and outcomes
- Oversee the initiatives public communication plan
- Refine and finalize strategic plan and recommendations
- Approve and Advocate Plans and Recommendations

# Proposed Establishment of Three MSI Subcommittees

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## Citizens Advisory Subcommittee

- Collect public input
- Develop formal policy/management recommendations.

## Resources Subcommittee

- Develop formal resource needs and use recommendations

## Strategic Plan Subcommittee

- Draft MA Shellfish Strategic Plan

# Proposed MSI Task Force Subcommittees

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- Iterative and collaborative process
- Task Force members and/or their appointees can serve on multiple subcommittees
- Management and coordination via Steering Committee / Consulting Coordinator



# Proposed Citizens Advisory Subcommittee

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Host series of public meetings to collect public input to guide:

1. Shellfish regulation re-write
2. Aquaculture and Propagation Permitting (MAPP and SRP)
3. New legislation
4. Update of strategic plan, including:
  - a. Aquaculture management
  - b. Wild harvest management
  - c. Restoration management

# Proposed Resources Subcommittee

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## Research and Document:

1. Existing shellfish funding and other related programs and services
2. Current wild and commercial shellfish resources (shell stock, open areas, etc.)
3. Determine resource needs to support future growth of shellfish

# Proposed Strategic Plan Subcommittee

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## Review:

1. MA Aquaculture Strategic Plan (completed 1995)
2. Integrate recommendations from Citizens Advisory Subcommittee
3. Integrate recommendations from Resources Subcommittee

# **Proposed Collective Subcommittee Work**

- develop and implement a communications plan to ensure widespread outreach to appropriate audiences, through diverse channels.
- communicate directly with their peers to gather feedback and ideas from a wider range of stakeholders (in person discussions, meetings, and/or surveys).
- meet at least 4 times, and identify 2-3 goals and 3-4 specific targets (actionable activities) specific to their stakeholder groups. They will share results and recommendations.
- will present recommendations to the Task Force for review and consideration of approval.

# Creation of MSI Plan and Recommendations

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## Task Force:

- Share draft plan with officials (including boards of selectmen, legislature, regulating agencies) and the Governor's office, to ensure alignment and future political and financial support during implementation.
- Host additional public outreach meetings to share the draft MSI Plan and collect feedback.
- Finalize the initiative's plan, including goals, strategies, implementation activities, metrics, assignments, and committed or potential funding sources.

# CONCLUSIONS

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Implementation of the MSI plan will ensure and maintain strong economic growth of shellfish businesses, future and continued investment in, research, education, and effective management throughout the state.

# **DMF SRP-Request:**

***Massachusetts Aquaculture Permitting Plan (MAPPP)  
and Special Review Procedure (SRP) integration***

# Massachusetts Aquaculture Permitting Plan (MAPP)

Environmental permitting of aquaculture and propagation activities is often considered cumbersome and confusing by municipalities and private proponents

Projects undergo rigorous individual review by multiple agencies under a number of local bylaws, and State and Federal statutes and regulations

- DMF, DEP, BUAR, CZM, NHESP, Conservation Commission, Harbormaster, ACOE, NMFS, USCG, EPA

Projects may also be required to undergo MEPA review based on their size and location

- This is particularly important for spatial planning efforts and comprehensive management plans that involve aquaculture where cumulatively projects may exceed ENF/EIR thresholds (i.e. aquaculture in 208 plans, municipal aquaculture development areas)
- Due to the structure of the individual agency review process, often aquaculture projects do not trigger MEPA thresholds when reviewed individually, but would when considered cumulatively.

Many projects use similar gear types with common and predictable impacts and alternatives

- The similarities in the type of gear, impacts, and benefits associated with many shellfish aquaculture and propagation activities provides an opportunity for enhanced coordination of the permitting process and a common impact and alternatives assessment.
- DMF in coordination with UMASS Boston and partner EEA agencies is proposing to develop the MAPP, to encourage sustainable growth in the Commonwealth's private marine aquaculture industry and the responsible implementation of municipal shellfish propagation and restoration activities through the development of environmental and public use standards for aquaculture projects, and by expanding opportunities for agency, industry and public input on future aquaculture development in the Commonwealth

# Massachusetts Aquaculture Permitting Plan (MAPP)

## Under MAPP, DMF intends to:

- Develop guidance on permitting process for common aquaculture and propagation activities,
- Conduct an impact and alternative assessment for common aquaculture and propagation activities; and,
- Work with stakeholders to establish performance metrics that minimize environmental impacts and user group conflicts associated with these activities (BMPs).

## MAPP does not eliminate individual agency review requirements; however,

- If proposed projects adopt established metrics, they would likely have predictable permit conditions and review agencies could easily identify that alternatives have been considered.
- By coupling the MAPP with the MEPA Special Review Procedure (SRP) it is possible to streamline MEPA review of projects that minimize damage to the environment by demonstrating consistency with siting criteria, conditions, and other measures established through an SRP; and,
- Through their participation in the MAPP-SRP process, agencies can evaluate options for coordinated and expedited agency review through the development of formal policies, administrative guidance, or potential regulatory revisions.

# What is a MEPA Special Review Procedure?

A MEPA Special Review Procedure (SRP) is a regulatory process appropriate for reviewing proposed projects in which there is more than one proponent, more than one participating agency with a significant role,... and that may have similar environmental impacts...

A SRP serves the purposes of MEPA, by providing :

- Meaningful opportunities for public review,
- Analysis of alternatives; and,
- Consideration of cumulative environmental impacts

Under an approved MAPP- SRP, aquaculture and propagation projects that exceed MEPA thresholds will continue to receive adequate and robust review; however,

- If the proponent is proposing activities included in the scope of the SRP, and adopts the relevant environmental and public-use standards, they may be eligible for an alternative MEPA review process established by the SRP and tailored specifically for aquaculture projects.
- Many projects already avoiding impacts under individual agency regulations and policies.

# MEPA - SRP

When establishing an SRP the Secretary generally establishes a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC shall be diverse in affiliation and experience and fairly represent a range of viewpoints. The CAC's main role is to advise the Secretary's establishment of the SRP, by:

- Assisting in the determination of the scope of activities to be included in the MAPP SRP
- Assisting in the identification of siting and performance criteria that an aquaculture or propagation project proponent could follow to avoid and minimize damage to the environment and impacts on other user groups.
- Reviewing documents and other deliverables called for in the SRP Certificate

DMF submitted request to Secretary Beaton to establish aquaculture SRP process

- Request letter posted in MEPA monitor for comment,
  - A number of comment letters were submitted in support of establishing the SRP, and suggested connecting the SRP- CAC with the MSI process,
- Secretary Beaton and MEPA reviewing request and comment letters

Task Force feedback on potential integration of SRP-CAC with MSI?

# **DISCUSSION**