

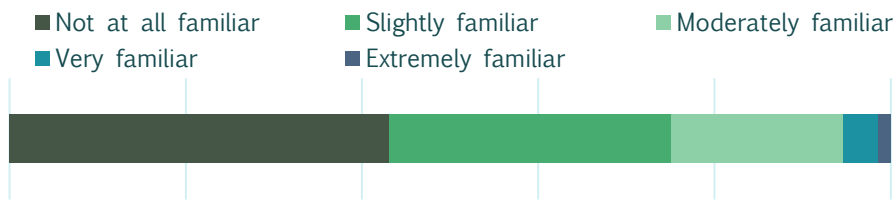
Planning for sustainable shellfish aquaculture: identifying current activities, public perceptions, conflicts, and compatibilities

Project Summary: Shellfish aquaculture can contribute significantly to satisfying the growing demand worldwide for seafood. Bivalves also play a vital role in cleaning local waters, restoring estuaries, and providing habitat structure. The 2011 Washington Shellfish Initiative demonstrated national and state commitment to expanding shellfish aquaculture. But ecologically and socially sustainable expansion requires planning based on human use data, social research, and outreach and education. This project combines geospatial data on commercial aquaculture with research into its social dimensions to support marine spatial planning along the West Coast.

A second stakeholder survey has also been distributed to a broad array of local planners, federal and state natural resource agency staff, and representatives of natural resource industries, citizen groups and conservation NGOs.

The final stage of this project will occur in 2015 through a series of workshops. Survey results and spatial data will be packaged with other relevant information and presented to decision-makers throughout the region. Information will support shellfish aquaculture planning and development though identification of current or potential multi-use conflicts or misconceptions. Information will also inform potential public outreach and education efforts, and increase awareness of the environmental, economic, and social opportunities shellfish culture provides.

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Citizen responses when asked: How familiar are you with the practice of shellfish aquaculture?

Progress: We have assembled more than a dozen GIS map layers of shellfish activities (commercial farms, classified shellfish growing areas, established tribal harvest areas), relevant infrastructure (docks, ramps, refrigeration, storage, processing, and export-ready cargo facilities), and federal, state, and local regulations in Washington, Oregon, and California. A complementary survey explores two overarching questions: “Are these communities opposed to or supportive of continued or expanded shellfish aquaculture?” and “What are the implications for aquaculture planning and development?”



Citizen responses when asked: Have you ever seen a shellfish aquaculture farm?

Project staff and partners at WSU Social & Economic Sciences Research Center sent a survey probing community views of expanded shellfish aquaculture to more than 4,000 residents in twelve coastal counties in Washington, Oregon and California. The survey elicited an unusually high 34 percent response rate and answers responding to a wide range of issues. It revealed the general view that shellfish farms “neither enhance nor detract from the scenery of coastal areas” and their “greatest benefit” is “providing locally produced seafood.”

