

Establishing shellfish hatchery biosecurity certification standards to facilitate interstate transport of shellfish seed

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East Coast Molluscan Aquaculture



- 13 states, ~1,000 farms, ~ 50 hatcheries and nurseries
- Diverse array of species and production methods
- Native populations support fisheries, provide ecosystem services




A series of facilitated workshops supported by National Sea Grant, several state Sea Grant offices, and the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service identified the development of a hatchery certification program to facilitate transfers of younger and more biosecure products as a key need. The concept of convening a Hatchery Certification Working Group to develop a hatchery certification program was universally accepted by industry and regulators alike. This project will provide the dedication and focus necessary to (1) convene the Working Group to develop protocols that are both stringent and practical, (2) create an implementation-ready program for hatchery certification, and (3) provide outreach to appropriate stakeholders in support of program implementation.

Hatchery certification is a strategic action that can reduce the need for expensive surveillance and costly batch certifications while providing valuable biosecurity tools to facilitate safe transfers that minimize disease risk. Developing a viable hatchery certification

Aquaculture is the fastest growing segment of food production, with molluscan shellfish aquaculture leading the way. Oyster aquaculture alone has doubled production in just the past five years, leading to seed shortages in many states and subsequent increases in requests for seed importation across state lines. The East Coast Shellfish Growers Association estimates there are more than 1,000 shellfish farms operating along the East Coast, with around 50 shellfish hatcheries producing a dozen or more different species. Several species are impacted by pathogens that decrease survival and production and threaten native stocks. Knowing which pathogens pose risks and which do not in any particular situation is key to protecting cultured stocks and wild populations. Without access to such information, regulators are pushed toward more precautionary measures, up to and including bans on transfers.

system will increase regulatory confidence and promote industry growth. By facilitating the safe transfer of shellfish seed along the US East Coast, this project will reduce a major impediment to aquaculture while increasing sustainable domestic marine aquaculture in the short term. The effect will be immediate because sourcing shellfish seed has become a limiting factor for production.

