

# Shellfish Aquaculture

## (Regional Conservation Partnership Program)



### Virginia Overview

NRCS has been helping people help the land for more than 80 years but has only recently begun working with producers whose harvests come from the sea.

Successful growth and harvesting of oysters contributes to and depends on clean water. The Virginia Aquaculture Program is designed to address habitat degradation and support sustainable oyster farming for a healthier Chesapeake Bay.

### How We Can Help

NRCS is offering dedicated funding and resources through a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) project to help growers expand their footprint for oyster production on private leases and re-establish historic reef areas through spat-on-shell production.

This approach requires proper preparation of the leased beds to create a firm substrate. NRCS offers financial assistance for placement of new shell on the bottom to significantly improve the success rate for production on beds that have remained fallow for years.

Through our partnership, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) will share knowledge gained from restoring thousands of acres of public oyster beds with oyster growers on private leases. VMRC and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) will help successful applicants locate the best sites for bed restoration, produce the correct



NRCS offers special funding to help growers improve the water quality and habitat shellfish need to thrive in the Chesapeake Bay.

amount of spat on shell, find shell sources and coordinate transport and deployment for bottom preparation.

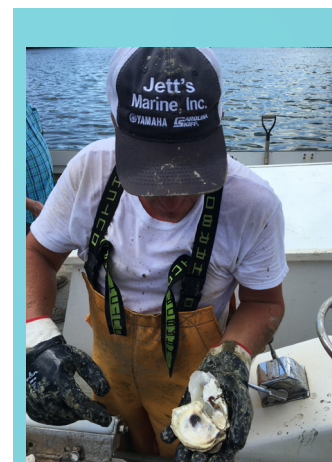
### Eligibility

The project area includes all privately-leased bottomlands suitable for oyster cultivation in Virginia's portion of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Tidal areas are considered state waters, so most bottom aquaculture operations require a state lease.

Individual tracts of leased ground will only qualify one time for oyster bed restoration and one time for enhancement/replenishment. The funding cap for practice code 643 (Restoration and Management of Rare or Declining Habitat) is \$20,000/producer/year.

### How to apply

If you are interested in participating in the aquaculture initiative, you must first meet VMRC technical eligibility requirements.



### Partnering for a Cleaner Bay

The recently renewed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) project, *Oyster Bottom Restoration through Aquaculture*, will continue to offer dedicated funding and resources to help growers expand their footprint for oyster production on private leases and provide lasting benefits beyond the life of the lease and the practice..



Images courtesy of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

The pre-approval form is available on the Virginia NRCS website and at the participating Service Centers listed below.

Program sign-up is continuous with periodic evaluation and pre-approvals throughout the year. NRCS will help eligible producers develop a conservation plan, which will become the basis of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) contract. EQIP applications are

ranked based on a number of factors, including the environmental benefits and cost effectiveness of the proposal.

## Learn more

Contact your local NRCS office or visit us online at [www.va.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.va.nrcs.usda.gov) to learn more about the shellfish aquaculture project. Consult the list below or visit [farmers.gov](http://farmers.gov) to find a participating USDA Service Center.

## Virginia Aquaculture Program Contacts and Locations

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District Conservationist	Service Center/Localities Served
Jennifer Templeton PH: 757-302-4435 <a href="mailto:jennifer.templeton@usda.gov">jennifer.templeton@usda.gov</a>	<b>Accomac:</b> Accomack and Northampton counties
Trenton Howell PH: 757-389-7606 <a href="mailto:trenton.howell@usda.gov">trenton.howell@usda.gov</a>	<b>Chesapeake:</b> Cities of Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth and Norfolk
Scott Hammond PH: 804-210-3243 <a href="mailto:scott.hammond@usda.gov">scott.hammond@usda.gov</a>	<b>Gloucester:</b> Gloucester, Mathews and Middlesex counties
Michael Combs PH: 804-966-3076 <a href="mailto:michael.combs@usda.gov">michael.combs@usda.gov</a>	<b>Quinton:</b> Cities of Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, Richmond and Williamsburg; and Charles City, Henrico, James City, New Kent and York counties
Jake Browder PH: 757-279-3286 <a href="mailto:jake.browder@usda.gov">jake.browder@usda.gov</a>	<b>Smithfield:</b> City of Suffolk and Isle of Wight and Surry counties
Dwight Forrester PH: 804-466-3188 <a href="mailto:dwight.forrester@usda.gov">dwight.forrester@usda.gov</a>	<b>Tappahannock:</b> Essex, King William and King and Queen counties
Lucee Kossler PH: 804-250-4462 <a href="mailto:lucia.kossler@usda.gov">lucia.kossler@usda.gov</a>	<b>Warsaw:</b> Richmond, Westmoreland, Northumberland and Lancaster counties



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