

New Hampshire Oysters



Oyster Aquaculture in the Granite State

The unique ebb and flow of New Hampshire's two estuaries, the Great Bay Estuary and Hampton-Seabrook Estuary, drive diverse ecosystems that support the Granite State's tradition of oyster aquaculture.

Oyster aquaculture is currently the fastest growing seafood industry in New Hampshire.

In recent years, the growth and expansion of oyster farming has helped to keep New Hampshire's rich maritime culture alive as an alternative to wild-harvest marine fisheries, which have experienced declines throughout the Gulf of Maine.

Oyster aquaculture supports the state's Blue Economy, providing revenue and jobs as well as valuable ecosystem services in our coastal waters.

Commercial oyster harvest in New Hampshire is conducted exclusively using aquaculture methods. No wild harvest.

The American (or Eastern) Oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, is harvested in New Hampshire.

Oyster aquaculture is permitted and carefully managed by NH Fish and Game Dept.



By the Numbers: New Hampshire's Oyster Industry



Area of licensed oyster aquaculture sites in NH

1,887,522

Oysters harvested in NH in 2025

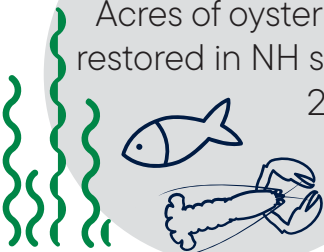


\$6.80 million

Economic benefit of oyster aquaculture in NH in 2025

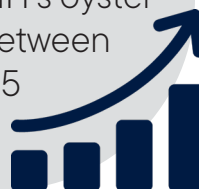
52.7

Acres of oyster reef restored in NH since 2009



946%

Increase in the value of NH's oyster harvest between 2015-2025



12

Businesses actively harvesting market-sized oysters in NH in 2026



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Benefits to the Ecosystem

As filter feeders, oysters are key to maintaining the health and nutrient balance of our local, coastal ecosystems. **1 oyster filters up to 50 gallons of water per day!** Filtration removes suspended particles – feeding the oysters and creating clearer, cleaner water.

In 2025, the oysters farmed by NH's aquaculture industry contributed **\$4.63 million in ecosystem services** to the estuarine environment by filtering excess nutrients, like nitrogen, out of our coastal waters. **65.7%** of all farmed oysters were designated for reef restoration projects.

NH's oyster growers regularly **contribute to scientific research projects** with NH Sea Grant and UNH, such as:

- Monitoring the bay and oyster health with UNH researchers
- Exploring new harvest methods, gear types and configurations in oyster aquaculture
- Participating in oyster reef restoration and assessment

NH oyster growers imported **9.75 million juvenile seed oysters** in 2025.

History and Tradition

New Hampshire's indigenous tribal communities consumed many varieties of shellfish, including oysters, and much of their mollusk diet is recorded in their shell heaps (called middens) which date back 2,500 years.

Wild oysters were later an easy, valuable source of protein and trade commodity for European settlers and colonists.

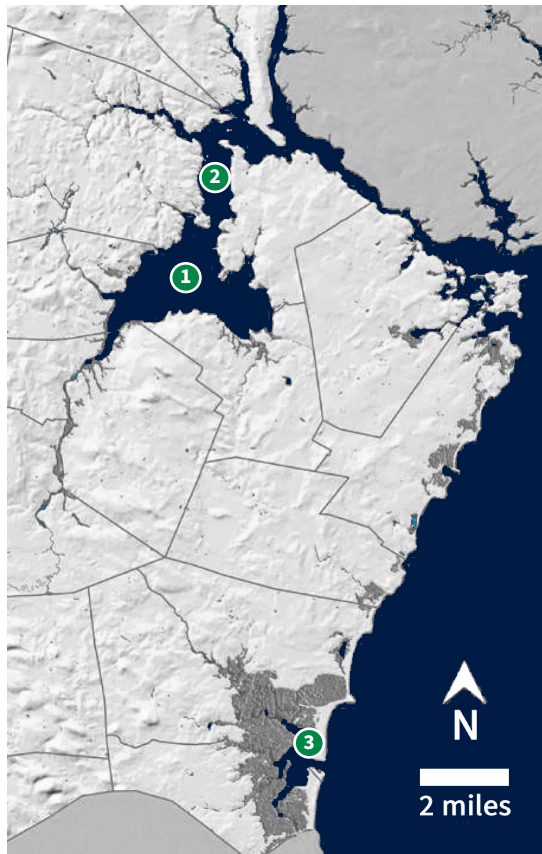
By the late 1800's, pollution, sedimentation, over-harvesting, and disease left only a fraction of New Hampshire's wild oyster population.

Today, recreational oyster harvesting is carefully regulated and commercial harvesting can only be performed by licensed growers who import approved seed oysters.



Important Sites for NH Oysters

- 1 Great Bay
- 2 Little Bay
- 3 Hampton-Seabrook Estuary



NH Oyster Harvesting Efforts

Great Bay is open to recreational oystering and oyster reef restoration activities. Commercial oyster aquaculture and harvest occur in Little Bay and Hampton, NH.

Of the **12 businesses** actively harvesting market-sized oysters in NH in 2026:

- 11 operate in Little Bay
- 1 operates in Hampton-Seabrook

Of the **100.1 acres** permitted for oyster aquaculture in NH in 2026:

- 87.9 acres are in Little Bay
- 12.2 acres are in Hampton-Seabrook

Between 2015-2025:

- 946% increase** in the value of NH's oyster harvest
- 86% annual growth rate** of harvest value

Questions?

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