

# 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 Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary, drive unique and 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.

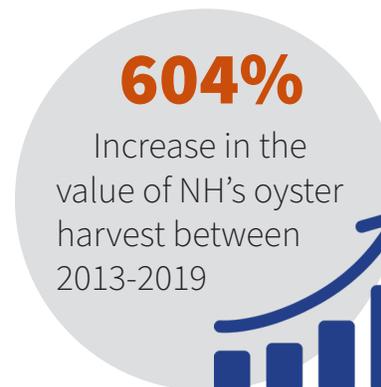
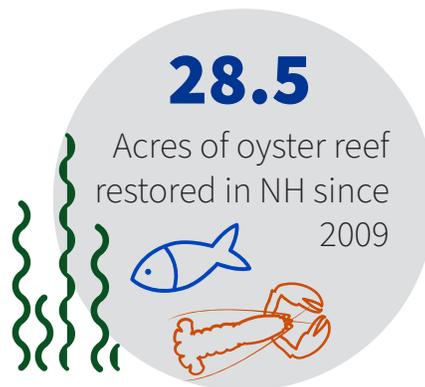
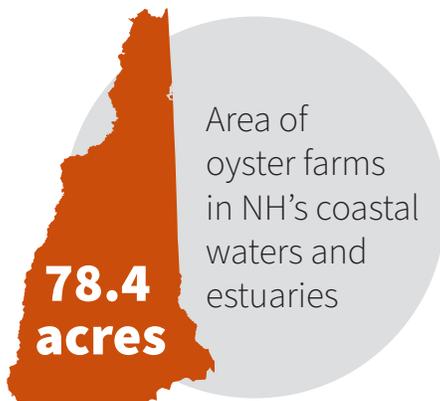


Commercial oyster harvest in New Hampshire is conducted exclusively using aquaculture methods. No wild harvest.

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



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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.

The shellfish aquaculture industry in the Great Bay Estuary annually contributes **\$1.4 million in ecosystem services** to the estuarine environment by removing excess nutrients from the estuary. (Source: NOAA Center for Coastal Monitoring Assessment study)

NH's oyster farmers 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 farmers are planning to stock over **4.5 million juvenile seed oysters** this year (2020).

## 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.

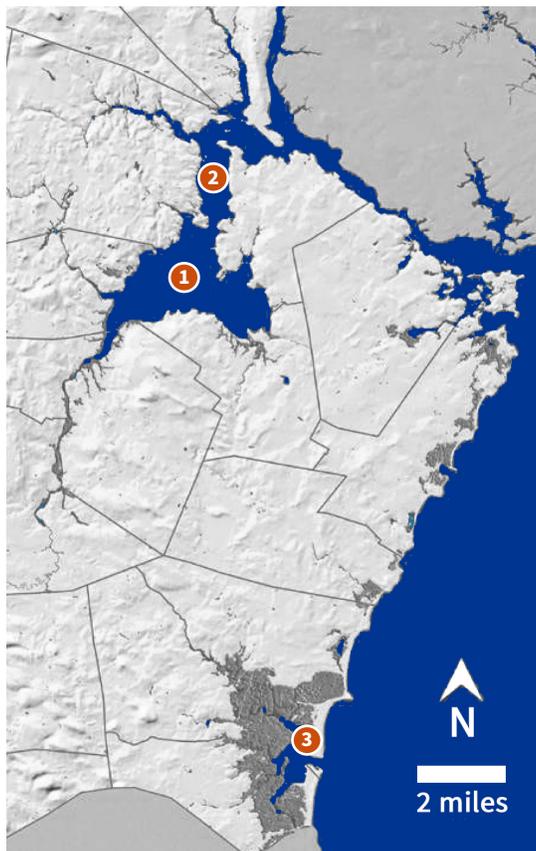
By the late 1800's, pollution, sedimentation, over-harvesting, and disease left only a fraction of New Hampshire's wild oyster population.

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



## Important Sites for NH Oysters

- 1 Great Bay
- 2 Little Bay
- 3 Seabrook-Hamptons 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 Harbor.

Of the **13 businesses** actively harvesting market-sized oysters in NH in 2019:

- 12 operate in Little Bay
- 1 operates in Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary

Of the **78.4 acres** farmed in NH:

- 73.9 acres farmed in Little Bay
- 4.5 acres farmed in Seabrook-Hamptons Estuary

Between 2013-2019:

- 604% increase** in the value of NH's oyster harvest
- 100.7% annual growth rate** of harvest value

## Questions?

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