



# East Coast Shellfish Growers Association

November 10, 2010

Maryland Aquaculture Conference

Bob Rheault

ECSGA, Executive Director

# Mission Statement

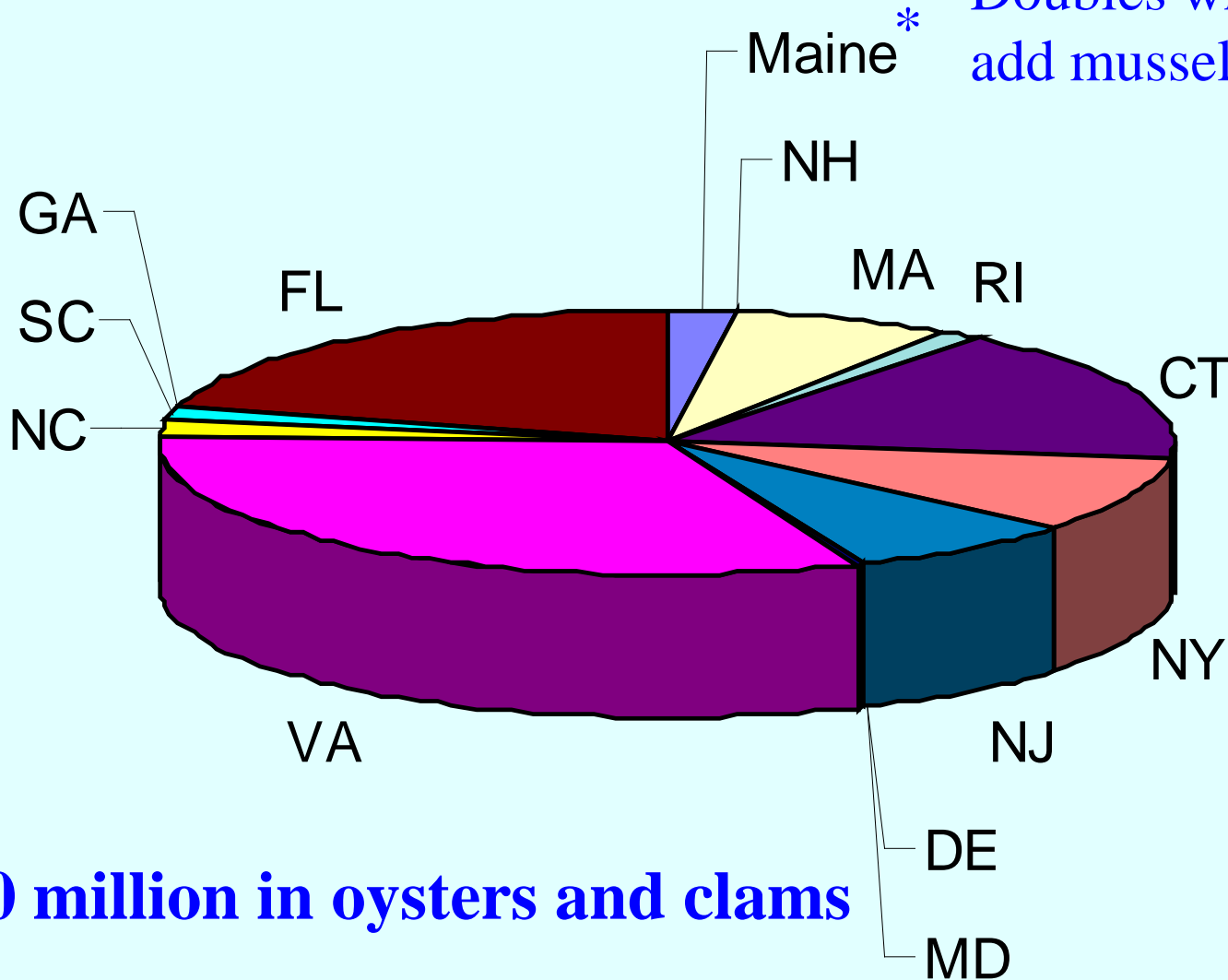
*The mission of the ECSGA is to promote responsible commercial shellfish aquaculture through market research and promotion, active involvement in public education, participation in policy formation at the state and national levels.*

# Industry Snapshot

- 1000 farms from Maine to Florida
- Primarily small farmers with less than 10 employees
- Collectively harvest \$100M
  - 60% clams, 39% oysters
  - production growing

# Shellfish Aquaculture by State

Doubles when you  
add mussels



**\$100 million in oysters and clams**

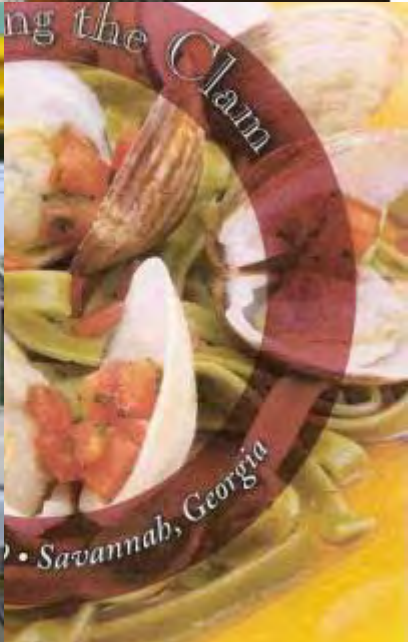
# ECSGA Goals

- *Marketing -(festivals, press)*
- *Communications (to public, regulators, politicians and growers)*
- *Establish Best Management Practices*
- *Foster workable regulations*
- *Promote research on industry issues*

# Achievements

- *WAS article - Benefits brochure*
- *Letters & comments - ACOE permitting, Sewage blending, Organic status, endangered species listing, C. ariakensis, many more....*
- *Annual trips to Washington, DC (7 years!)*
- *Formation of ECSRI*
- *Earmarks for critical shellfish research*
- *Survey to identify research priorities*
- *Best Management Practices project*





# Marketing

- *Need to be generic, cannot promote one type of shellfish to the detriment of another*
- *Explore grant opportunities for market research and product promotion*
- *Site tours for food writers and chefs*
- *Point of sale items (table tents, flyers, recipe cards, promotional inserts, brochures)*



# Membership and Budget

- **Strategy to increase membership**
  - Membership increased by 46% in 2009
  - Still missing most of industry
- **Most state associations are members**
- **Attract sponsorships and donors**
- **Fund raising through festivals**
- **Our budget limits what we are able to achieve**

# Communications

- *Web site - recently updated*
- *ECSGA LISTSERV*
- *Newsletter - electronic and paper versions*
- *Public outreach and education (fliers, brochures, recipes)*
- *Point of contact for press questions*
- *Facebook - become a "fan"*

# BMP project

- *Top industry priority*
- *Funded by NRAC - and NOAA to extend the work to southern states*
- *Developing Environmental Policies and Codes of Conduct*
- *Worked with states that have existing BMPs (ME, MA, VA, FL)*
- *Helping growers develop individualized operational manuals*
- *A marketing tool*

# Regulations

- **SAV – Essential fish habitat**
- **ACOE - Nationwide permit review**
- **Endangered Species Listing**
- **ISSC – post harvest treatment requirements**
- **Regulations on dredge harvest**
- **Preserve water quality – CWA hearings**

## **Solutions – be proactive**

- **Letter writing, sample letters, info on how to reach reps., get your representatives out on the farms**
- **Take part in important stakeholder meetings**
- **Use the press to get the positive word out**
- **Advocate for research to show the facts**

# Research

- ECSRI established to accept Federal grants
- Survey conducted to identify top priorities need to refine, condense and print
- Active member participation in research.
- Share priorities list with funding agencies.

# *East Coast Shellfish Research Institute*

## **Board of Directors**

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Haskin Shellfish Res. Lab, Rutgers  
Univ. of North Carolina- Wilmington

SC Dept. of Natural Resources

University of Florida

Pemaquid Oyster Company

Wellfleet Aquafarm

Delaware Sea Grant

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

University of New Hampshire

Roger Williams University

Ocean Equities

Cherrystone Aquafarm

University of Rhode Island

Cornell Cooperative Extension

University of Georgia

NOAA, Northeast Fisheries Center



# Issues and Priorities

- **Marketing, market research and product promotion.**
- **Breeding program to improve disease resistance, growth and performance.**
- **Develop sensitive rapid identification tools for pathogens and toxins.**

# Priority: Explain Environmental Benefits

- Verify environmental benefits using science.
- Expand educational efforts to agency personnel, NGO's and local officials and others regarding the beneficial ecological effects.
- Develop marketing strategy which stresses the importance of aquatic stewardship.
- Promote and educate the public, government agencies, and decision-makers on the ecological benefits shellfish culture is providing to the marine environment.

# Top Rated Priority

**Seek a streamlined process for  
local, state and federal permits**

# ECSRI

## Active Research Projects

- Rapid detection and differentiation of pathogenic strains *Vibrio parhemolyticus*. (URI & UNH, and for 2010 ARS Del. State)
- Evaluation of heavy metals in East Coast shellfish (Roger Williams and URI)
- Evaluation of impacts of shellfish culture and mechanical harvest on benthic communities (Milford & Rutgers).
- Evaluation of the impacts of clam farming and harvesting on benthic communities

# Survey of metals in farmed shellfish

(Dale Leavitt & Stephen O'Shea)

Survey cadmium (Cd), mercury (Hg) and other trace metal levels in

- *Crassostrea virginica*
- *Mercenaria mercenaria*

# East Coast Shellfish Research Institute -- NOAA Milford Laboratory

Effects of mechanical harvest of oysters  
and hydraulic clam dredging on leased  
grounds.

Industry partners –

- Jesse D. Inc.
- Frank M Flowers  
and Sons





# East Coast Shellfish Research Institute Virginia Institute of Marine Science Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory

## *Industry Partners-*

*Cherrystone Aquafarms (VA)*

*Mathis Clam Farm (NJ)*

Assessing the  
impacts of clam  
aquaculture on  
the intertidal  
seafloor habitat  
and benthos



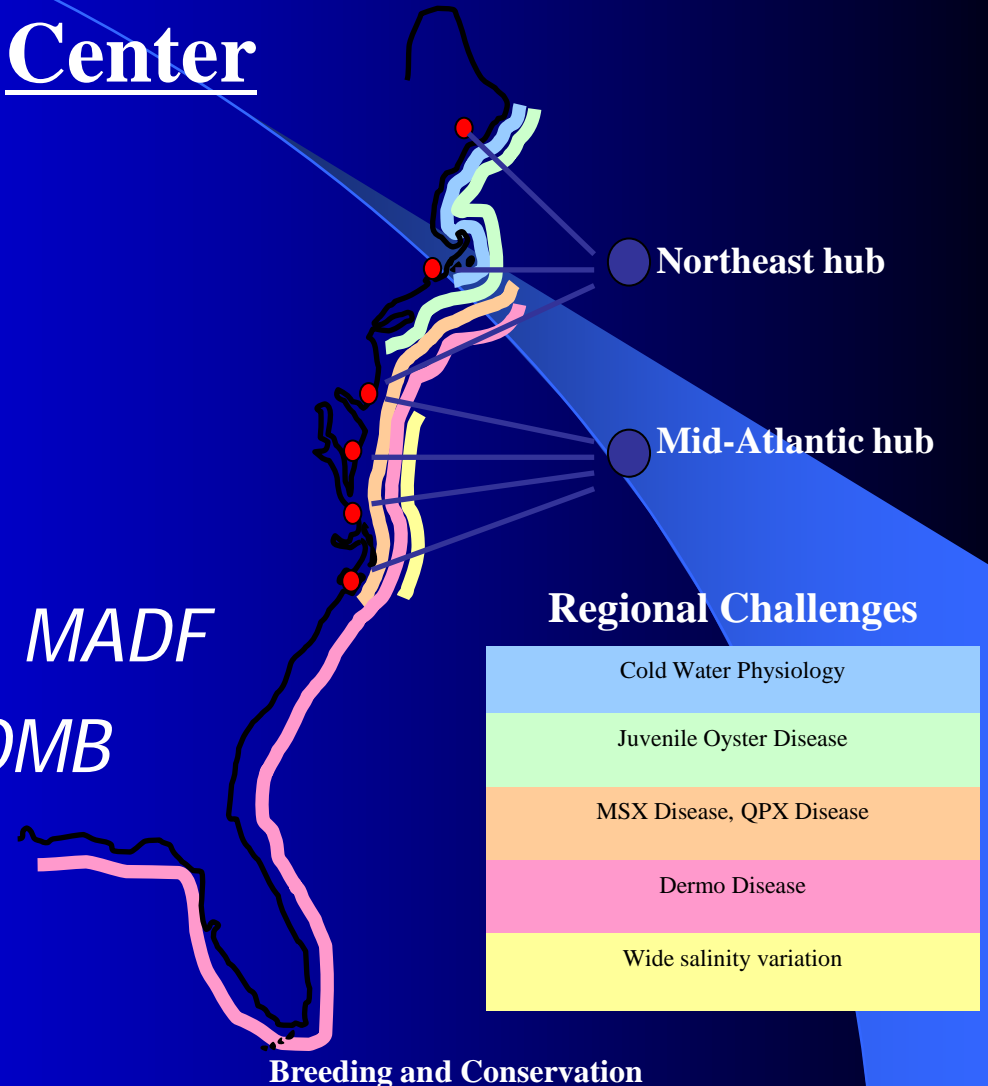
# 2010 Legislative Priorities

- FDA's action to ban raw Gulf Oysters
- Shellfish Breeding Program
- Marketing – funds and Specialty Crop status
- Clean water issues –
  - LIS Program, National Estuaries Program,
  - Clean Water Act failure to address non-point source pollutants
  - Nutrient Credit trading for nutrient bioharvesting

# ARS Shellfish Breeding Center

Collaborators:

- *Univ. Maine*
- *URI*
- *Rutgers - Haskin Lab - MADF*
- *UMD - Horn Point - COMB*
- *VIMS*
- *UNC Wilmington*



# Shellfish Breeding Center

- USDA- ARS center
- Leverage existing talent and facilities
- Add geneticists and breeding specialists
- Additional resources for sequencing, grow out trials and disease monitoring
- Accelerate selective breeding for disease resistance and production traits

# WWF Sustainability Certification

- Working with WWF to ensure standards are attainable and affordable.
- Does the market want sustainable seafood ?
- Process being driven by large buyers, not consumers.
- What will the cost of certification be?
- Standards available – expect certification available in about a year

# FDA Raw Oyster Ban

- Announced new “guidance” at ISSC meeting October 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Require Post Harvest Processing of Gulf oysters harvested during warm months
- Policy addresses *Vibrio vulnificus* bacterial illnesses (30 illnesses annually)



# Impacts of FDA ban

- PHP doubles the cost – kills the value
- FDA wanted to include *V. parahaemolyticus*
- Most East Coast states have had some issues with *V.v.* and *V.p.*
- Raw bars cannot serve dead oysters
- Once we have to sterilize our product we are in direct competition with cheap Asian product

# ECSGA Action

- *Working with Gulf and West Coast producers*
- *Stay positive*
  - *We have the safest shellfish on the planet*
  - *We continue to improve our industry at all levels*
- *Educate legislators about economic impacts.*
- *Education: Lower temperatures and better handling from farm-to-fork will cut illnesses.*
- *Educate at-risk consumers to avoid all raw foods, especially oysters in summer*

# Get Involved !

You need the ECSGA -  
- and we need you

- *Communications / Policy / Information*
- *Marketing / Festival Planning / Tastings*
- *Regulations / Political Action*
- *Membership / Sponsor recruiting*
- *Research - ECSRI*

What are your priorities?

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