

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR THE OREGON SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

BACKGROUND:

Molluscan shellfish, including oysters and clams, have played an important role in the history and culture of the Oregon coast. They also represent a critical component of Oregon's marine ecosystem and provide important commercial, recreational and ecological benefits to Oregonians. Commercial mariculture of oysters is estimated to have an annual, direct economic value of about \$10.6 million in Oregon, and commercial clammers generate about \$507,500 annually from the harvest of bay clams and razor clams from Oregon waters. In addition, the recreational harvest of clams and crab has been responsible for \$38 million in annual, direct and indirect expenditures on the Oregon coast. Oregon is recognized as a leader in producing oyster seed and advancements in shellfish science and technology. Like our neighboring states to the north and south, Oregon is proposing a collaborative shellfish initiative designed to enhance the production of cultivated shellfish, increase economic benefits to coastal communities, increase the opportunities for sport harvests, and conserve, protect and enhance our valuable wild stocks of shellfish resources.

The Joint Interim Task Force on Oregon Shellfish (the Oregon Shellfish Task Force) was created by House Bill 2209, (2015) to advance the policy of the state to *enhance and expand cultivated shellfish production; conserve, protect and restore wild populations of native shellfish; and improve water quality and the health of aquatic and marine habitats* by developing the framework and recommendations for an Oregon Shellfish Initiative. The Oregon Shellfish Task Force was composed of representative members with broad interests including shellfish mariculture, commercial and sport harvests, seafood safety, tribal perspectives, resource conservation and public education. The Oregon Shellfish Task Force held seven open and collaborative meetings from November 2015 through September 2016.

CALL TO ACTION FOR THE 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

The Oregon Shellfish Task Force identified the critical actions listed below to be addressed in the 2017 legislative session. Other actions recommended by the Task Force that could be implemented over the next five to eight years:

- Recommend executive action or seek legislation to be drafted formalizing the Oregon Shellfish Initiative as a collaborative public/private partnership and state-wide coalition. The Oregon Shellfish Initiative is envisioned as a multi-year, collaborative and cooperative effort that focuses the activities of state and federal agencies, coastal tribes, local governments, private shellfish growers, academia, non-governmental organizations and public stakeholders to achieve mutual benefits with regard to shellfish resources;
- Designate representatives to serve as members of the Oregon Shellfish Initiative – Oversight Committee, coordinated jointly by the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- Advocate for approximately \$2.9 million in additional funds, outside agency budgets, in support of the Oregon Shellfish Initiative and tap certain existing resources and relationships in support of 2017 legislative action;

- Convene the Oregon Shellfish Initiative – Oversight Committee to consider what has been implemented in the 2017 session, and adopt the priority goals and recommendations offered by the Oregon Shellfish Task Force for future consideration; and
- The Oregon Shellfish Task Force recommends that the Oregon Shellfish Initiative – Oversight Committee work to ensure clean water to protect and restore shellfish growing areas as well as encouraging efforts to monitor ocean conditions. in the nearshore zone as well as in bays and estuaries.

SEEK LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED IN 2017 TO:

- Direct the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) Food Safety Program to serve as the lead state agency to coordinate permitting and management of commercial shellfish mariculture in Oregon waters and ensure enforcement of existing regulations, including compliance with the “use it or lose it” statute;
- Investigate development of an interagency memorandum of understanding between ODA and the Department of State Lands (DSL) regarding a Removal-Fill Permit related to mariculture;
- Direct the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to work with other agencies to consolidate information critical to shellfish mariculture and support the development of a state-wide, digital GIS database;
- Direct ODA to transfer existing resources from the Tillamook Bay Water Quality Pilot Program (House Bill 2209, 2015) to expand monitoring in other shellfish-growing areas;
- Provide support for the Oregon State University Molluscan Broodstock Program;
- Continue oversight on the import, harvest and cultivation of controlled species;
- Identify potential impacts of ocean acidification on native and cultivated shellfish by supporting programs like those at Whiskey Creek Shellfish Hatchery;
- Reestablish an Oregon Harmful Algal Bloom monitoring program;
- Conduct a baseline economic survey and analysis of Oregon shellfish harvests;
- Conduct an aquaculture and commercial clam shellfish marketing study;
- Document the economic costs of ocean acidification and benefits of ocean acidification research;
- Increase public education, outreach and cultural appreciation about the importance of shellfish by providing support for a dedicated staff person at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) for outreach and education;
- Enhance the enforcement of existing commercial and recreational catch regulations for shellfish by encouraging collaboration with coastal tribes and appropriating additional resources;
- Improve public access along the shoreline to enhance sport harvest of shellfish;
- Appropriate funds to design and install education and outreach signs at key access points;
- Increase frequency of shellfish stock assessment surveys and conduct stock assessment surveys in subtidal zone;
- Involve the public in shellfish surveys and collection of fisheries data;
- Hire fisheries scientists with expertise on clams and other shellfish, and analysis of impacts to intertidal and subtidal habitats; and
- Conserve and protect the three known populations of Olympia oysters in Oregon bays and estuaries.

Copies of the report may be obtained by sending an email to beth.reiley@state.or.us. An electronic copy is also available at <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/201511/Committees/JTFS/Overview>