

Public Use and Access

Rights of use and access around a licensed area may be confusing, so keep the following in mind:

Growers have been granted exclusive use of the waters and flats in their area for aquaculture purposes by the Town and have the exclusive right to harvest within this area.

The public may cross a licensed area while fishing, fowling, or navigating. However, penalties apply for damaging, disturbing, or removing any markings, equipment, or shellfish on the site.

Cultivating shellfish requires substantial investment of both time and money. It may be best to avoid aquaculture sites except when necessary.



C. Linder

Towns on Cape Cod may have their own rules and regulations in addition to those set by the Massachusetts General Laws. Consult your local shellfish department for more information.

What's the Gear for?

Mesh bags, crates, and other equipment protect young shellfish from predators, greatly increasing their survival (pictured below).



Green crabs and oyster dills are two predators that feed on small shellfish.



Environmental Consideration

Aquaculture projects must pass several impact assessments during permitting to ensure that the environment is protected and that no naturally productive shellfish beds are lost.

Shellfish departments also raise shellfish to enhance local populations at public beaches and to improve water quality. By feeding on algae, shellfish effectively "clean" the water they live in.



Shellfish may be purchased from local markets, restaurants, and licensed seafood dealers.



C. Linder

For more information see the Massachusetts General Laws, the BMP manual available at the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension website, or your local shellfish department.

Produced by the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension and the South Eastern Massachusetts Aquaculture Center
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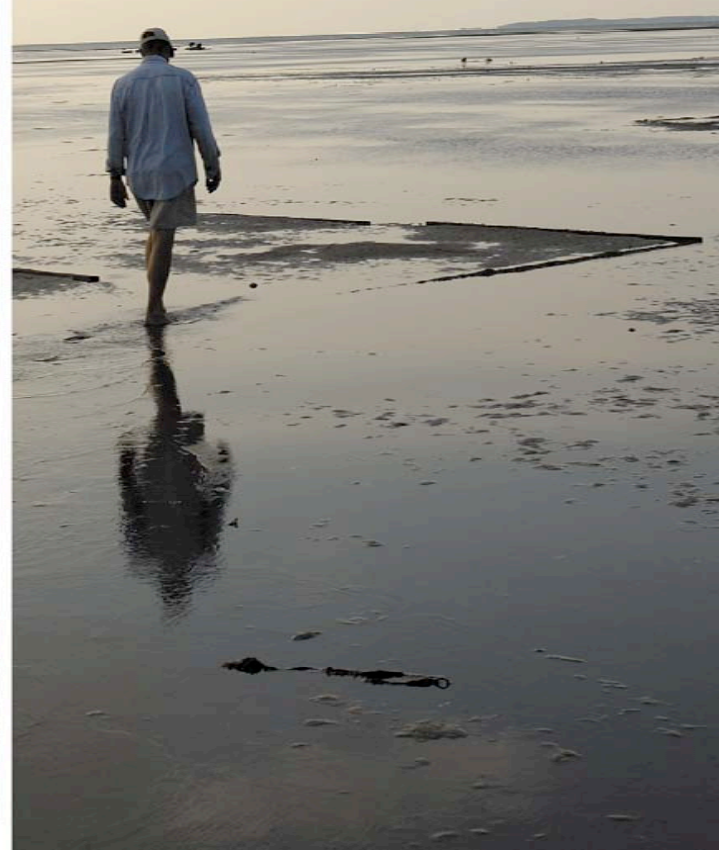
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Shellfish Aquaculture on Cape Cod

A Traditional and Sustainable
Industry for Barnstable County



Aquaculture may be described as the cultivation of marine or freshwater fish or shellfish under controlled conditions.

Shellfish aquaculture has a long history and continues to be a growing part of the local economy.

In 2003 Cape Cod produced over 47,750 bushels of shellfish valued at more than \$3.8 million.

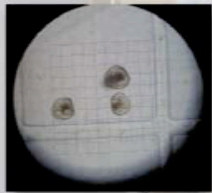


Cultivation

Growing shellfish is an involved process that requires several years of work before a profit can be made. This process begins in hatcheries with the cultivation of microscopic larvae.



Adult shellfish are stimulated to spawn in temperature-controlled tanks, producing thousands of larvae.



Larvae

Larvae are fed a diet of algae until they reach 1-3mm in length. The tiny shellfish (called seed) are then sold and shipped to growers who must tend them for at least 2 years before selling them to market.



Algae



Seed

Several species of shellfish are cultivated on Cape, though Quahogs (Hard-shelled clams) and Oysters are the most frequently grown.



Quahogs



Oysters

Other cultured species include:



Steamers (Soft-shells)



Razor Clams



Bay Scallops

Growing on the Flats

After receiving federal and state approval, growers are granted a license over an area of tidal flats or land under coastal waters by the Board of Selectmen or Town Council.



On these licensed sites a grower is entitled to:

- Plant/grow shellfish
- Plant cultch to catch seed
- Harvest and take legal shellfish
- Grow by means of rafts, racks, or floats
- Protect shellfish with appropriate gear



Tides may change quickly and play an important role in aquaculture.

Tidal Influence

The appearance of licensed sites may change dramatically between tides and make them more or less visible; the following guidelines may assist in recognizing aquaculture sites:

Aquaculture gear may extend up to 18 inches above the substrate.

Eat Oysters

Sites should be marked with stakes and/or with yellow or hazard buoys.

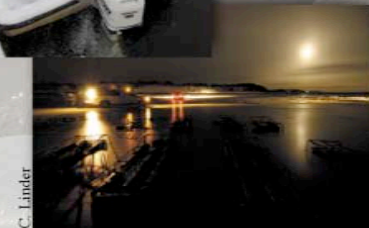


Aquaculture Buoy

Many shellfish growers follow tide schedules closely to access their sites and complete their work; this may restrict time and lead to harsh working conditions.



While some growers may be willing to answer questions, remember that this is their livelihood and the time to work at a site may be limited.



Adverse weather and late night or early morning tides are examples of the challenges that growers face.