

## **SMP Vision**

The shellfish that inhabit our waters are part of the social fabric of Rhode Island and are integral components of the marine ecosystem that provide food, recreation, income, employment, and other environmental, economic, social, and cultural benefits. In order to ensure the health and proper ecological functioning of the marine ecosystem and realize the socio-economic benefits associated with healthy shellfish populations, we shall seek to preserve, protect, manage, and when necessary, restore shellfish resources and essential habitats using the best available information and science. We shall also strive to employ sound governance to achieve fair, equitable, and safe access to shellfish resources and support the interests of those who harvest for personal use and enjoyment; those who participate in the commercial wild harvest fishery; those who engage in the aquaculture of shellfish species; those who rely upon the shellfish industry as a source of food, and those who recognize the importance of shellfish in our marine ecosystems.

## **SMP Goals (10 years)**

1. **Honor, promote and enhance the existing shellfish resource and uses.** Shellfish offer a myriad of ecological services to Rhode Island state waters, jobs and business opportunities to its residents, and recreation for all. As such, actions should strive to maintain healthy populations of shellfish while honoring the current uses of Rhode Island's natural resources and promoting Rhode Island shellfish as a source of local, sustainable seafood.
2. **Contribute to a properly functioning ecosystem that is both ecologically sound and economically beneficial.** The prosperity of the shellfish industry depends on the health of our marine environment and the quality of the water that shellfish inhabit. It is therefore necessary to evaluate the current status and potential future changes to the natural resources, ecosystem conditions, and anthropogenic impacts on the marine environment and recommend actions to protect and, where necessary, restore our marine waters.
3. **Manage marine and shellfish resources for equitable and sustainable use.** Through both scientific research and practical knowledge, better understand the existing activities taking place in Rhode Island waters. Identify best management practices to support all shellfish activities for long-term sustainability while supporting compatible uses and minimizing user conflicts to ensure the equitable harvest of these marine resources.
4. **Enhance communication and improve upon the established framework for coordinated decision making between state and federal management agencies, industry, and other interested parties.** Engage management agencies, industry and other interested parties in the development of the shellfish management plan and implementation of recommendations to ensure that all concerns and appropriate legal requirements are integrated into the process. Coordination will allow for the sharing of information across all sectors, improve management, clearly establish roles and responsibilities of all parties and streamline the licensing and permitting process where appropriate.

**SMP Objectives (2 years)**

1. Document and increase our understanding of the current status of Rhode Island's natural resources and ecosystem conditions to help promote the health of our ecosystem and prosperity of the shellfish industry.
2. Identify the existing commercial, recreational, conservation uses of our state waters as a tool towards minimizing use conflicts.
3. Document the historical and current perspectives, memories, and narratives of Rhode Island's shellfish community in order to better understand, honor and promote the cultural importance of shellfish to the state.
4. Define principles for a comprehensive stock assessment program that guides management decisions for all managed shellfish species.
5. Maintain a viable, equitable industry while identifying value-added marketing opportunities.
6. Improve understanding of state, regional, and national economic aspects of the commercial, recreational, and restoration activities involving shellfish.
7. Improve the industry's and public's understanding of management decisions and processes.
8. Support existing and identify alternative mechanisms to appropriately facilitate coordination among decision-makers, industry and other stakeholders by clarify legal roles and responsibilities of state and federal agencies. .
9. Establish a Research Agenda that identifies knowledge gaps, proposes future research needs, recognizes potential funding sources, and discusses potential collaborative/partnership opportunities.
10. Identify sustainable sources of funding for implementing management plan recommendations.
11. Develop and implement a stakeholder supported shellfish management plan.