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TITLE: RHODE ISLAND OYSTER RESTORATION: WE'RE GREAT AT GROWING OYSTERS BUT WHAT HAPPENS TEN YEARS LATER?

ABSTRACT: Federal, State and local non-profit organizations have long recognized the ecological and socioeconomic importance the eastern oyster, *Crassostrea virginica*, represents to Rhode Island. Oyster restoration programs in Rhode Island date to the early 1900's and have been making considerable progress and gaining popularity in the past decade. Despite the increase in restoration activities, careful monitoring of restored populations and associated habitat often takes a back seat to efforts of introducing shellfish into estuaries, thus, hindering adaptive management. To better understand both short and long term performance of oyster restoration in Rhode Island we assessed growth, survival, disease and recruitment over four years in two distinct programs; Roger Williams University's Oyster Gardening for Restoration (2006-present) and the *North Cape* Shellfish Restoration Program (2003-2008). The two programs have resulted in over 8.5 million seeded oysters in thirteen distinct restoration sites in Rhode Island waters including salt ponds, tidal creeks and open coves in Narragansett Bay. Mean growth of oysters in restoration sites is between 30-50 mm annually with mean survival of 32% and 58% for year one and two+ oysters respectively. Mortality varies amongst sites and appears to be driven largely by disease. Within current sites, self-sustaining populations are hindered by the lack of recruitment, thus emphasizing the importance of proper site selection.