

**Maria Vasta, recent graduate of the Master of Arts in Marine Affairs program at the University of Rhode Island, for "Shellfish Farms as Agritourism Destinations: The Growers' Perspective."**

**Contact:** Maria Vasta at [maria\\_vasta@uri.edu](mailto:maria_vasta@uri.edu)

Agritourism is defined broadly as the incorporation of commercial tourism into a working farm. As shellfish aquaculture production in the United States increased over the years, aquaculture growers began adopting agritourism activities on their farms. This research focused on examining (1) the different types of agritourism currently offered on shellfish farmers along the US East and Pacific coasts of the U.S.; (2) what do growers think motivates the development of tourism on shellfish farms; (3) what prevents some growers from developing tourism; and (4) how these perceptions vary among different stakeholder groups (e.g. East coast v. Pacific coast growers; growers with v. without tourism). In order to address these questions, 64 shellfish growers from 15 states along the East and Pacific coasts of the US were surveyed electronically. This study found that while a variety of agritourism activities are offered on US shellfish farms, tours are overwhelmingly the most popular. Additionally, survey respondents from all stakeholder groups agreed that *Education and Outreach* was the strongest motivational factor for developing these activities on shellfish farms. Finally, this research showed that a lack of resources, lack of infrastructure, and the need to pay additional costs were the biggest challenges to implementing shellfish farm tourism.