



# SUFFOLK COUNTY

## Economic Development & Planning

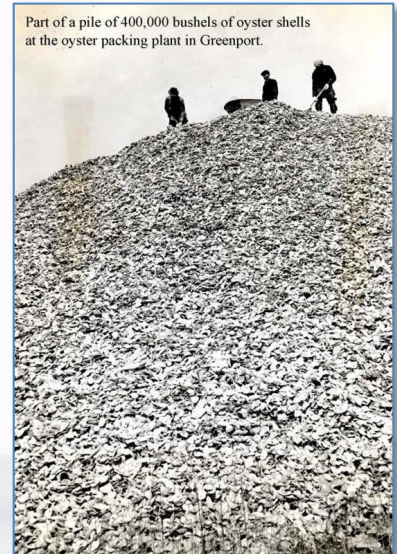
[www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Economic-Development-and-Planning](http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/Economic-Development-and-Planning)

## Shellfish Industry



### Historic Long Island Shellfishing

- In 1609 when Henry Hudson arrived in what is now New York City there were approximately 350 square miles of oyster reefs in the harbor and surrounding waters. These waters contained nearly half of the world's oyster population.
- As early as the 1820s, "on-bottom" oyster culture was occurring around New York Harbor to meet New York City's insatiable demand. This practice moved eastward to Long Island waters when farmers sought superior water quality in Long Island's bays and estuaries.
- During the 1970s Long Island's Great South Bay was the world's richest clam factory, and New York provided more than 60% of the nation's hard clams.
- In 2004 the State of New York ceded underwater lands in the Peconic Bay Estuary to Suffolk County for the purpose of private shellfish aquaculture and authorized the County to establish a lease program to secure the economic development and environmental benefits associated with shellfish farming in the region.



Part of a pile of 400,000 bushels of oyster shells at the oyster packing plant in Greenport.

### Shellfishing Today

- According to the latest information available in the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture, aquaculture is approximately a \$5.3 million industry in Suffolk County.
- Over the last five years Suffolk County has landed over one million bushels of shellfish including clams, oysters, mussels, conch, and scallops worth over \$50 million!
- There are 11 public and private shellfish hatchery operations across Suffolk County that seed our bays and sell seed to private shellfish farmers.
- Suffolk County's most robust shellfish aquaculture programs are in Peconic Bay and Gardiners Bay through the Suffolk County Aquaculture Lease Program, and the Town of Islip's Bay Bottom Leasing Program.
- In the last six years oyster landings have increased 74% in Peconic Bay and Gardiners Bay and 396% in the Town of Islip waters.
- Suffolk County provides yearly funding to grow and place 285,000 bay scallops annually in the Peconic Bay in order to provide the broodstock necessary to rebuild and sustain this important fishery. The fishery landed 108,000 pounds of scallops in 2018 at a value of nearly \$1.6 million. Over the last five years nearly \$6 million in scallops have been landed in this now revived industry.
- The Suffolk County Department of Economic Development & Planning has estimated that the roughly 370 active acres in the Suffolk County Aquaculture Lease Program generate approximately \$1.5 million in market value annually. Applying traditional economic multipliers over the six-year period of 2012-2017, the estimated economic output to the Long Island economy of the Lease Program is \$13 million.

| 2014 – 2018 TOP SHELLFISH LANDINGS |         |               |              |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| Rank by Bushel                     |         | Rank By Value |              |
| Bay Scallops*                      | 412,812 | Oysters       | \$22,711,875 |
| Hard Clams                         | 309,362 | Hard Clams    | \$16,782,013 |
| Oysters                            | 299,067 | Bay Scallops  | \$5,985,757  |
| Soft Clams                         | 60,996  | Soft Clams    | \$4,379,083  |
| Conch                              | 12,565  | Conch         | \$628,158    |
| *pounds                            |         |               |              |





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### *Good For The Environment*

- Shellfish like oysters help waterways by eating algae, filtering out particulates and excess nutrients and creating habitat for other organisms to thrive.
- One oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water each day. According to the Long Island Oyster Growers Association, Long Island oysters filter approximately 900 million gallons of water every single day. That is the same as filtering 1,500 Olympic-size pools every day and more than 500,000 Olympic-size pools every year.
- As generations of oysters settle on top of each other and grow, they form reefs that provide structured habitat for many fish species and crabs. Restoring oyster populations will, over time, restore the local marine ecosystem's natural mechanisms for maintaining itself, resulting in cleaner water and greater biodiversity.
- A University of Maryland Extension study found that growing oysters could remove a kilogram of Nitrogen at a cost of \$13/kg. A wastewater treatment plant could cost anywhere between \$32 to \$99/kg. (Parker and Bricker 2017.)



### *Suffolk County Supports Shellfishing*

#### **Suffolk County Aquaculture Lease Program (SCALP)**

- SCALP provides an opportunity to obtain secure access to County-owned underwater lands for private, commercial shellfish aquaculture in Peconic Bay and Gardiners Bay. The lease program is intended to expand the marine-based economy by increasing private investment in shellfish aquaculture businesses at secure locations which do not conflict with commercial fishermen and other bay users.
- As of 2019, Suffolk County has issued 55 leases covering 785 acres of underwater lands. Approximately 370 acres are believed to be in active production in the approximately 158,000-acre bay.



- If you are interested in participating in the SCALP, please visit our website or contact Susan Filipowich, Senior Environmental Analyst, at (631) 853-4775 or email [Susan.Filipowich@SuffolkCountyNY.gov](mailto:Susan.Filipowich@SuffolkCountyNY.gov).

#### **Suffolk County Project in Aquaculture Training (SPAT)**

- Suffolk County provides funding to a program offering Suffolk County residents classes in environmental education and shellfish cultivation. Participants can grow their own shellfish, mostly oysters, at the Suffolk County Marine Environmental Learning Education Center at Cedar Beach in Southold or at Tiana Beach in Southampton.
- For more information contact Kim Tetrault, Community Aquaculture Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County at (631) 852-8660 or email [kwt4@cornell.edu](mailto:kwt4@cornell.edu).