



RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
235 Promenade Street, Room 425
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

October 22, 2015

Mr. Mark Johnson
9 Seminole St
Warwick, RI 02889

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Rhode Island's shellfish resources are among our most valuable natural assets and an important part of the heritage and culture of the Ocean State. Our fisheries and aquaculture industries continue to sustain us, as a source of food, recreation, and employment, and warrant our continued support, sound stewardship, and commitment to improve management and to ensure healthy sustainable resources and prosperous industries.

As such, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) supports the development of shellfish hatchery operations in the state of Rhode Island. Currently, the Roger Williams University (RWU) hatchery is the only facility functioning in the State and operates at full-capacity supporting research and limited restoration efforts. Public Benefit Aquaculture initiatives like the quahog restoration activities at popular recreational shellfishing areas accomplished by RWU in collaboration with the Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association have shown promise at increasing local populations that are heavily exploited and provide a tangible public benefit. As restoration programs throughout the State are expanding, through programs like the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Oyster Bed Restoration and Management Program, there is an increasing need to grow the shellfish hatchery production capacity to meet the demand of these restoration activities.

In addition, the private aquaculture industry has increased more than ten-fold in the past 15 years and total yearly production now exceeds 7.5 million individual oysters and quahogs with a wholesale value in excess of \$5.2 million. As there are no private commercial hatcheries in the state, all seed are purchased from out-of-state hatcheries with hundreds of thousands of dollars leaving the state economy each year. The development of an in-state hatchery would provide the aquaculture industry with a more accessible seed supply and keep the aquaculturists money within the local economy.

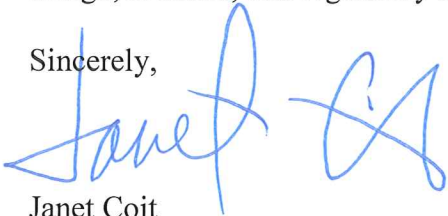
The development of an in-state shellfish hatchery and grow-out operation may have ancillary benefits. Nursery culture of shellfish in floating upweller systems or similar methods in open water may lead to reduced nutrients in State waters and combat issues associated with eutrophication, including hypoxia which can lead to fish kills. An in-state hatchery could also develop more localized strains of brood stock with higher genetic diversity that may result in enhanced disease resistance and a more profitable industry.

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In concept, RIDEM is supportive of the development of hatcheries in the State of Rhode Island for both public benefit restoration activities and for private shellfish seed production. The permitting of specific operations would be subject to full review by RIDEM, CRMC and other agencies, as all aquaculture operations are, to ensure that the design and location are appropriate and will not impact the environment or competing uses in a negative manner.

I commend your efforts in pursuing enhanced shellfish hatchery production capacity in Rhode Island. As your proposed project moves forward, RIDEM would like to continue working with you through the design, location, and regulatory review process.

Sincerely,



Janet Coit
Director

c/ Mike Walker, Commerce RI