# Washington: A Shellfish State

## The Environmental and Economic Value of Shellfish Resources in Washington

*The farming of oysters, clams, mussels, and geoduck in the cold, nutrient-rich waters of the Pacific Northwest is a long-standing tradition and an important cultural and economic part of Washington's coastal communities.*

### Tribal Harvest

Tribes have harvested shellfish for generations upon generations, feeding their communities and their culture with healthy protein from Puget Sound and coastal shores.

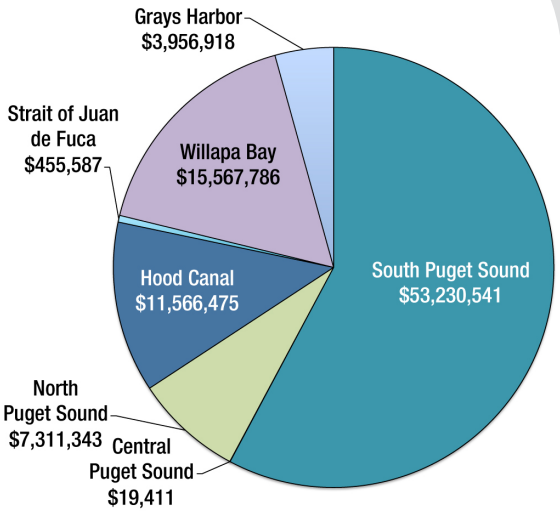
### Recreational Harvest

In recent years Washingtonians and visitors made almost half a million trips to Puget Sound and the coast to recreationally harvest clams and oysters. Many families consider this an important family tradition that connects them to their past and their lands.

### Shellfish Farming

Shellfish have been cultivated in Washington for more than 160 years, since our frontier days. The shellfish industry is a foundation of western Washington's rural economy and an important part of our state's heritage. Our shellfish are sought by consumers around the world and are a source of pride for the state.

**Value of Washington State Shellfish Aquaculture by Region, 2013**



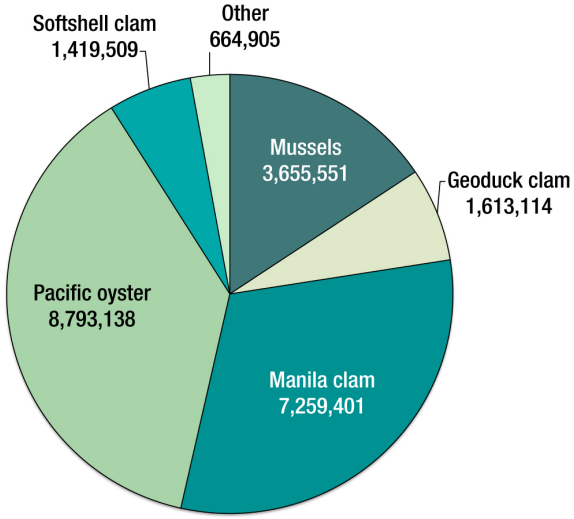

### Economic Benefits

To meet the growing demand for seafood, Washington shellfish products are sold throughout the United States and exported worldwide with primary markets in Canada and Hong Kong.

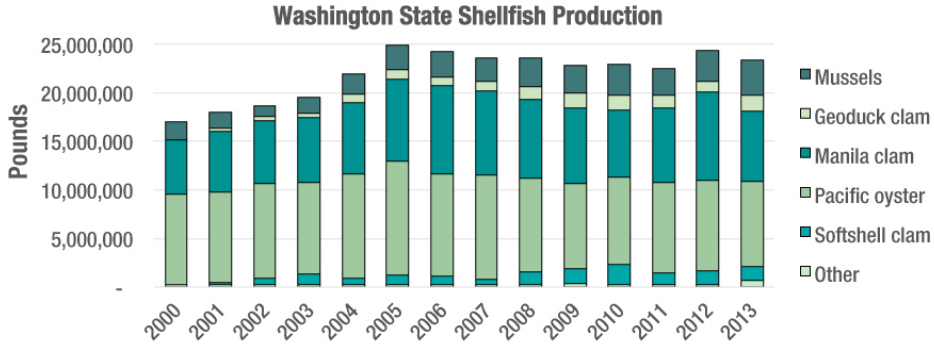
**Some facts:**

- Washington State is the leading U.S. producer of farmed bivalves.
- The total revenue of farmed bivalves in Washington was nearly $150 million in 2013.
- Shellfish aquaculture contributed $184 million to Washington's economy in 2010.
- Washington's shellfish industry generated 2,710 jobs in 2010.
- Washington's wild harvest shellfishery was valued over $40 million in 2012.

**Washington State Shellfish Aquaculture Production by Species and Weight (lbs), 2013**




**Washington State Shellfish Production**

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# WASHINGTON SHELLFISH INITIATIVE

## Did You Know?

- *A single oyster contains about 0.5 grams of nitrogen.*
- *Consuming a dozen oysters is equivalent to removing 6 grams of nitrogen from the marine environment.*
- *A weekly harvest of about 200 oysters can compensate for the nutrient inputs of a typical waterfront homeowner on a properly functioning septic system.*

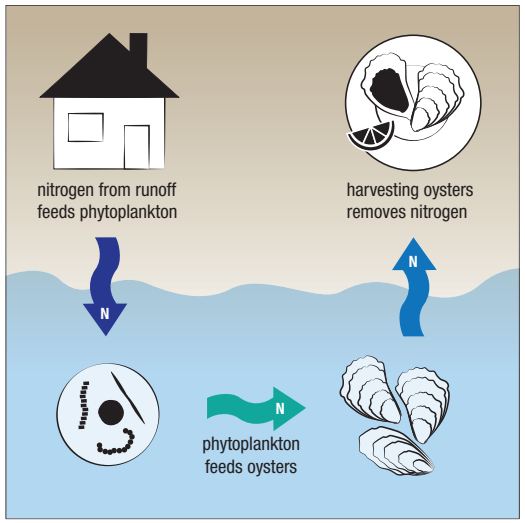
## Science and Research

*Research is underway to understand and develop mitigation for threats to shellfish resources including:*

- *Ocean Acidification*
- *Habitat Destruction*
- *Climate Change*
- *Harmful Algal Blooms*
- *Water Quality/Runoff*
- *Restoration of Native Shellfish*

## Restoring Lost Habitat

*Less than 4% of historic core populations of native Olympia oysters remain in Puget Sound. Restoring native oyster habitat in historic locations can create complex nearshore habitat, natural filtration, and larval production.*




## Environmental Benefits

Shellfish are a key part of our marine ecosystems, providing habitat, increasing biodiversity, and helping filter and cleanse water. When shellfish feed, they filter phytoplankton out of the water, resulting in improved water clarity and quality. Clear water lets more sunlight reach the seafloor, promoting the growth of healthy seagrass habitats.

### Biodiversity

Shellfish beds act like reefs, providing habitat and protection for many organisms. Scientists consistently find higher populations of marine life around shellfish beds.

## Citations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NOAA FISHERIES

The Washington State Shellfish Initiative, led by Governor Jay Inslee, is a convergence of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Shellfish Initiative and the state's interest in promoting the environmental, economic and cultural importance of shellfish.