



NRCS has been helping people help the land for nearly 75 years. The agency can also provide assistance to producers whose harvests come from the sea. Through a special partnership with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, NRCS will offer funding in 2010 to help growers in the Bay improve the water quality that shellfish need to thrive.

(Seed clams ready to be planted)

Natural Resource Concern

Water Quality



The successful growth and harvesting of shellfish depends on good water quality and adequate flow through the growing area. That quality is vulnerable to the effects of many coastal uses. This pilot program is designed to enhance not only the sustainability of aquaculture but also to reduce adverse impacts on water quality for shellfish producers.

(Aerial view of bottom plantings)

Assistance Available

The NRCS aquaculture program helps protect fish, shellfish, and invertebrate populations through careful monitoring of plants and wildlife, disease, and the environment. NRCS is funding one practice in this pilot.

Gear Cycling: When gear on site becomes fouled, the grower will replace it with clean gear placed in a new location. The fouled gear will be brought on shore, air dried and cleaned in an approved area off site. This cycle will continue throughout the growing season until 100 percent of the gear is cycled.



Typical bottom cage used to raise oysters

Eligibility and Sign Up

Shellfish growers in intertidal and subtidal areas where shellfish are plentiful and aquaculture is license/permitted by governing regulatory authorities. Program sign-up is continuous, so applications may be submitted any time. They will be evaluated periodically in a competitive ranking process as funding becomes available.

The first evaluation cutoff is March 12, 2010. To be eligible, growers will need to develop a Shellfish Aquaculture Management Plan. Call the NRCS field office at your local USDA Service Center or visit us online at www.va.nrcs.usda.gov for more information. To find your local office, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/.

(Photos courtesy of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science)