



OYSTER AQUACULTURE COST-SHARE PILOT PROGRAM

FY 2024

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to increase the participation of oyster aquaculture farmers in the Delaware Inland Bays Watershed and to pay for the nutrient reduction oysters are contributing to help Delaware meet its water quality goals. It has been proven that oysters filter the water and improve water quality. Each oyster removes 0.32 grams or 0.0007 pounds of N at harvest. There is the potential to grow 340,000 oysters per acre annually. With 298 acres available for lease, this has the possibility to remove 238 lbs. of nitrogen per acre each year. If all 298 acres were in production, there is the capability to remove 70,924 lbs. of nitrogen per year from the Delaware Inland Bays.

Eligibility

Oyster aquaculture farmers in the Delaware Inland Bays Watershed are eligible. Proof of lease(s) is required, and if an established grower, the last four months of harvest reports are needed to accompany the application.

Amount of Awards

The program is funded through the Conservation Cost-Share Program administered by the Sussex Conservation District. Annually, the Board may set aside a specified amount for oyster aquaculture. Awards will incentivize nutrient reductions on a per oyster basis which will provide funding for the oyster aquaculture farmers to invest in the necessary equipment to continue to expand their operation by paying up to \$0.05 per harvested oyster. Maximum amounts paid per applicant will depend on funding availability.

Guidelines

1. Applications will be accepted throughout the year; the fiscal year runs 7/1/23 to 6/30/24.
2. Submit the Delaware Inland Bays Shellfish Aquaculture Harvest Report to Bobbi Heck by the **10th of each month**. Written certification of oyster harvest must be submitted to SCD before payment will be made.
3. Payments will be made quarterly, by direct deposit, based on the monthly harvest report at \$0.05 per harvested oyster, with a maximum annual payment per applicant of \$7,500, or 150,000 oysters. Payments for FY24 will occur in Oct. 2023, Jan., April, and July 2024.



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