

# SHELLFISH BED RESTORATION & OLYMPIA OYSTER RECOVERY



**APPLICATION SUMMARY:**  
THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP) is a continuous sign-up. Applications will be evaluated as funding becomes available.

## APPLICATION EVALUATION PERIOD:

Applications will be evaluated periodically as funding becomes available. Check the Washington NRCS website for EQIP deadline information

## WHO MAY APPLY:

Shellfish producers, NGOs, and tribes within the Puget Sound and Willapa Bay area that own or lease shellfish beds.

## FIND OUT MORE AT: WA NRCS WEBSITE

## THE USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) WORKS TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES ON OUR NATION'S PRIVATE LANDS.

Financial and technical assistance is available from NRCS through the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) for individual producer contracts to help restore Olympia Oysters. EQIP funding will help pay for the shell substrate essential for the Olympia Oysters to grow upon as well as placement of bags of seeded native oyster.

The Olympia Oyster (*Ostrea lurida*), native name of Kloch Kloch, is the only native oyster in Washington. Once believed to have encompassed 10,000-20,000 acres in Puget Sound alone, this unique species is struggling. Historically the Olympia Oyster was a major food source for native people for thousands of years. The oyster was first commercially harvested around 1850 and shipped to the California gold fields. The industry continued to grow until around 1881 when the harvest began to decline. Since the Olympia Oyster was harvested only from wild stock, the high demand spurred an unsustainable harvest rate. By the 1890's steps were being taken to start farming the oysters. Farming the native oyster was often problematic and over time in the 1920's the Japanese oyster was brought in for farming.

Pollution and over harvesting has continued to take its toll on the Olympia Oyster. Today with less than five percent of the historic range of this species producing native oysters, an effort is underway to restore the Olympia Oyster. This keystone species is important for crabs, endangered juvenile salmon, and small marine life that thrive within the oyster beds.

### **NRCS can provide financial assistance to eligible producers under conservation practice (643) Restoration of Rare or Declining Natural Communities:**

- Bulk Shell Placement - Non-native oyster shell is spread onto the near-shore substrate to provide a base for new Olympia Oyster beds
- Seeded Cultch Placement - Bags of oyster shell are seeded with genetically appropriate Olympia Oysters are placed on near-shore substrate. Bags are opened and spread following a period of time to allow the Olympia Oysters to grow.

If you are interested in learning more about the native oyster and applying for the EQIP Shellfish practices, please call your local NRCS field office or visit us online for more information. Visit the [USDA Service Center Locator](#) to find your local NRCS representative.