



SHELLFISH AND AQUACULTURE SERIES

Great Salt Pond Aquaculture: Good for You and the Pond!

Block Island has two primary aquaculture crops, the Eastern Oyster (*Crassostrea virginia*) and Sugar Kelp (*Saccharina latissima*). We have four oyster farmers, one of whom also farms kelp and quahogs.

OYSTERS

Oyster aquaculture in the Great Salt Pond began in the late 1990s when the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) granted Block Island's first aquaculture lease. Since then a total of eight oyster leases have been permitted, and combined they cover less than 5% of the GSP and its inner ponds. The most densely farmed area is Trims Pond, where you can see floating cages and bottom racks (sometimes visible at low tide) containing bags of oysters.

An oft-quoted statistic is that the eastern oyster filters up to 50 gallons of seawater per day. While that is true in ideal conditions, as a practical matter oysters will filter less than half of that on average – still an impressive amount! Oysters are an incredibly important contributor to water quality, and a key player in keeping the GSP healthy.

Other names for the eastern oyster which you may see in New England restaurants include Wellfleet and Blue Point, but on the island please insist on our own Block Island Oysters!

KELP

Sugar Kelp is an ideal aquaculture crop as it is "planted" and harvested in Block Island's off-season when the GSP is nearly empty. Lines seeded with kelp are suspended in the water column with buoys in the fall, and the kelp grows until it resembles large lasagna noodles when it is harvested in late spring. It then is dried, minimally processed, and put to use as a nutrient-rich food, feed and fertilizer. A truly remarkable benefit is that feed made from kelp reduces cow flatulence, a significant contributor of greenhouse gases.

Kelp is increasingly viewed as a crop that will play a major role in creating a sustainable future. It stores excess nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous as well as carbon dioxide, which improves water quality, increases biodiversity, and mitigates ocean acidification and warming.

Do your part by buying kelp products and asking for it at restaurants!

OUR MISSION: To protect and enhance the environmental quality of the Great Salt Pond, including its shorelines and wetlands, and to promote appropriate and productive uses of the Pond's resources by residents, visitors and local businesses.

FUNDING: Individual contributions, membership dues, special events, program grants. IRS 501(c)3 non-profit. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

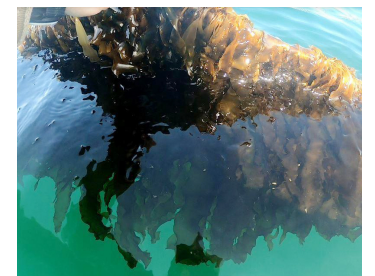
Please consider becoming a member of The Committee for the Great Salt Pond. For information and details, visit our website at cgspblockisland.org.



Block Island Oysters - unshucked



Block Island Oysters on the Half Shell



Kelp Harvest - Underwater Kelp

All Photos courtesy of Catherine Puckett