Delaware Shellfish Aquaculture Importation Policy

DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife

For the purposes of this policy, "import" means to obtain shellfish produced outside of the specific water body into which the shellfish will be placed.

Risks associated with importation of shellfish

- Importation of shellfish, even when tested, is not without risk. Imported shellfish can bring with them disease and non-native organisms.
    - Testing requirements seek to minimize, but cannot eliminate, risks associated with importation.
- Approval of import does not guarantee that product absolutely is, or will remain, either disease and pathogen or parasite free or that dermo will remain at low prevalence throughout growout.

Before importation

- Before any shellfish/shellfish product (larvae, seed, broodstock) is imported, written approval must be obtained from the Division of Fish and Wildlife.
    - The applicant must submit a request for approval of importation to the Division of Fish and Wildlife on a form supplied by the Division of Fish and Wildlife.
    - The applicant should contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife before the anticipated date of the importation to review source and testing requirements.
    - To allow for adequate evaluation and processing time, applications must be received by the Division of Fish and Wildlife a minimum of 7 calendar days prior to the requested shipment date(s).
    - Approval of importation is not guaranteed.
- Division of Fish and Wildlife contact number (302) 735-2960.

Shellfish Testing Policy

- Shellfish being transferred from waters of the Delaware Bay or its tributaries into Delaware's portion of the Delaware Bay waters will not require histopathology testing prior to import. All other shellfish, both those from outside of Delaware Bay waters as well as shellfish from Delaware Bay waters intended for other waters of the State, must be tested by a lab approved by the Division of Fish and Wildlife (Appendix A) prior to import.
- A dated and detailed histology and pathology report must be submitted to the Division of Fish and Wildlife.
    - A sample of at least 60 animals must be histologically processed.
        - All findings of parasites or commensals shall be reported.
- An individual (no composite testing) thioglycollate culture (RTFM), PCR, or qPCR analysis of tissue from at least 60 animals must be performed to test for the presence of Perkinsus marinus (dermo).

- The dated pathology report will be considered a characterization of the disease state of the shellfish seed, larvae, or broodstock from the source population for 45 days from the time that the shellfish were sampled (removed from ambient water) for testing.
    - If approved, shellfish from the tested source must be imported within 45 days of the date that the shellfish were sampled.
    - Beyond 45 days of the date that the shellfish were sampled, retesting of the population will be necessary.

Note: Should multiple aquaculturists wish to obtain shellfish from the same source shellfish population at the same time (within the 45-day period), a single histopathology report will suffice. Aquaculturists will still need to contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife and apply for separate importation permits.

- The required histopathology testing results on imported shellfish must have very light (under 5%) prevalence of dermo and zero prevalence of other pathogens (MSX, SSO, QPX, ROD, etc.) to be approved for importation and introduction for aquaculture purposes.
- The importation of shellfish for use in research will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may require submission of a formal proposal.

Appendix A. Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife Approved* Shellfish Testing Laboratories

- Rutgers Haskin Shellfish Lab
- VIMS Shellfish Pathology Lab
- Roger Williams University
- Kennebec River Biosciences
- State of Connecticut, Department of Agriculture
- Stony Brook University Shellfish Lab

* If you wish to use a laboratory that is not listed, please contact the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife to discuss the request.