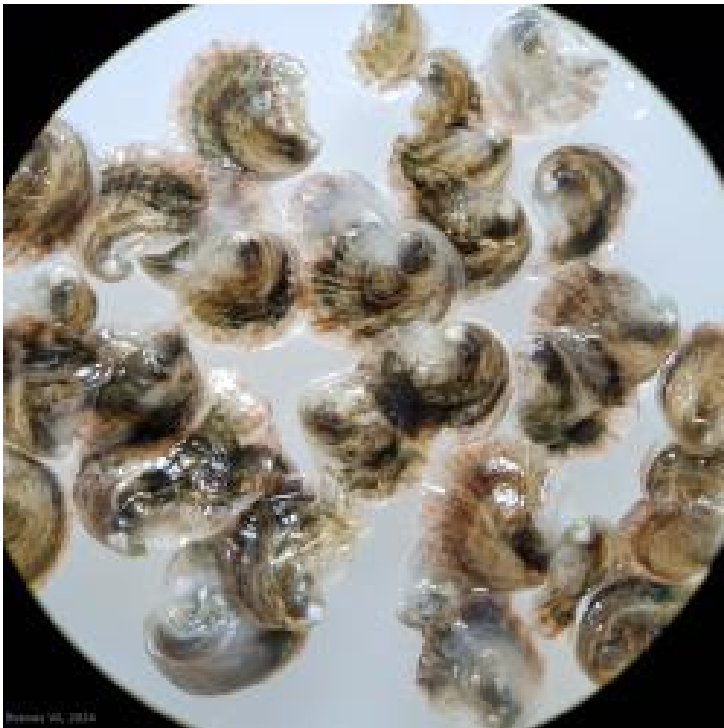


NOAA Fisheries opens Oyster Breeding Centre

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NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service launched a new, state-of-the-art Northeast Oyster Breeding Centre in June 2024. The centre is an investment that will bolster shellfish farming in the Northeast.

Scientists will use advanced selective breeding methods to develop better-performing lines of Eastern oysters to boost production. They aim to breed disease-resistant oysters that are resilient in the face of current and changing environmental conditions in the Northeast's diverse oyster-growing areas.

In a renovated hatchery at the NOAA Fisheries Milford Laboratory, 50 acrylic cones with continuously flowing, filtered seawater gently bubbled as tiny swimming oyster larvae munched on algae. In April 2024, scientists from NOAA Fisheries and USDA Agricultural Research Service spawned the first generation of oysters in both a traditional culture system in Kington, Rhode Island, and in the new high-density flow-through larval culture system in Milford, Connecticut, the first of its kind in North America.

NOAA and USDA will grow these juvenile, or “seed,” oysters in their hatcheries until they reach 5 millimetres, roughly the size of a pencil eraser. Then the young oysters will go to oyster grower partners while scientists continue to evaluate their growth and performance. This year, Moonstone Oysters in Rhode Island will be growing oysters from both hatcheries.