The Nature Conservancy
Washington

Growing Sustainable Shellfish

"Aquaculture, done in a socially and environmentally friendly manner, is the only way to meet the growing demand for seafood, while also creating jobs, generating revenues and taking pressure off over-stretched capture fisheries."

RANDALL BRUMMET, THE WORLD BANK

Estuaries are highly productive and complex ecosystems filled with diverse habitats including saltmarshes, mudflats, eelgrass meadows, and kelp beds. In Washington, estuaries are also home to wild and farmed shellfish beds that provide ecosystem services too. Understanding how organisms use aquaculture structures on shellfish farms compared to natural habitats is critical. This knowledge will help evolve aquaculture practices so that estuaries stay healthy in a changing environment.

SHELLFISH IN WASHINGTON

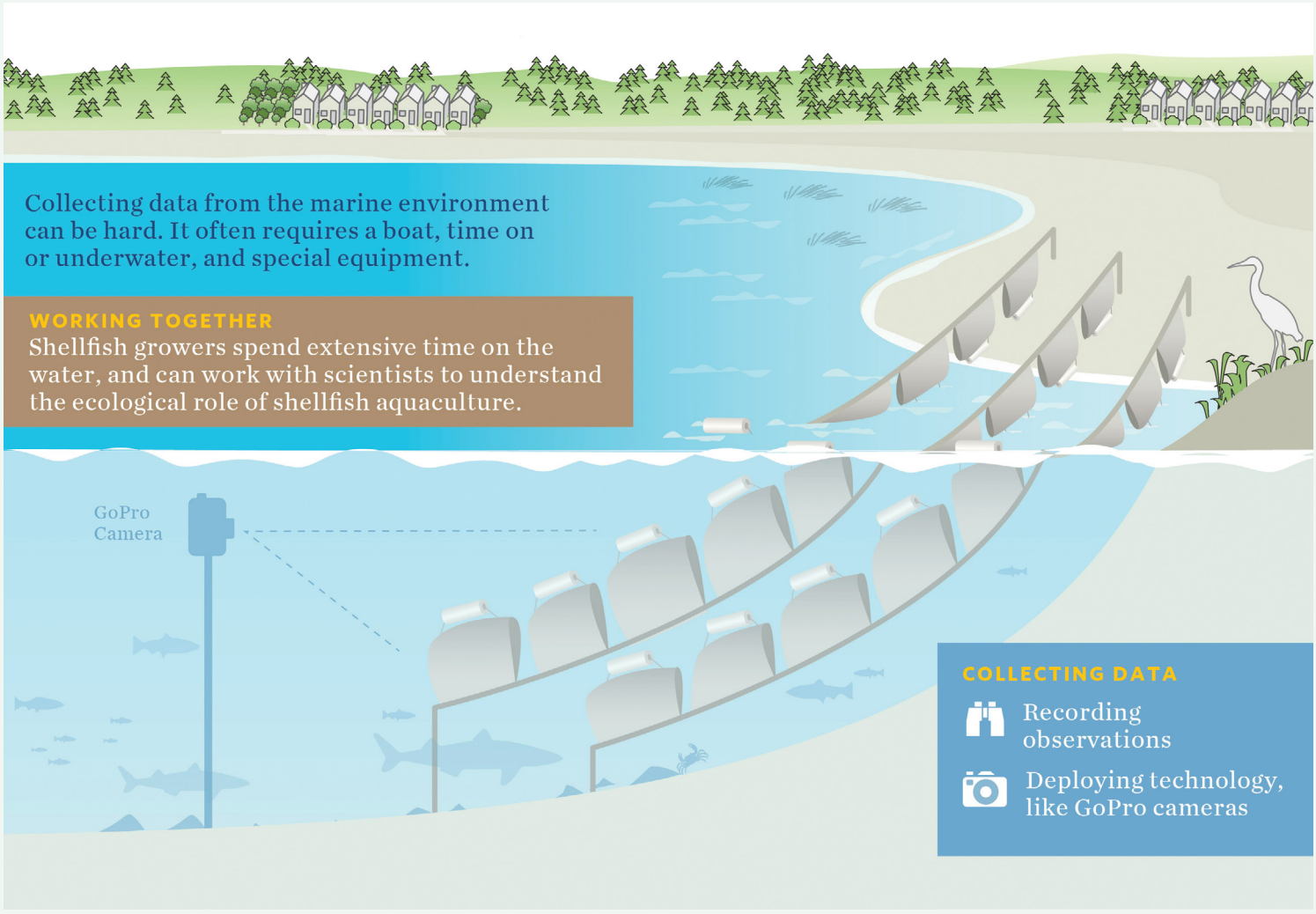
From tribal members who have harvested shellfish for centuries to multi-generational family farms and recreational harvesters, shellfish are a way of life for Washingtonians. As pressures from land use, climate change and ocean acidification increase, our understanding of this industry and its relation to the environment must grow too. To increase our understanding of shellfish aquaculture and to achieve sustainability, industry, conservation groups, and regulators must work together.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Shellfish growers in Washington have been deeply invested in coastal management issues. They have on-the-ground knowledge on the ecological benefits provided by aquaculture. Through this project, shellfish growers are collaborating with The Nature Conservancy, Washington Sea Grant, and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to use technology and visual observations to study the role of aquaculture in the environment. This research is timely and important, enabling shellfish growers and natural resource managers to work together toward sustainability.

learn more >

Collaborating for sustainable shellfish



Shellfish growers are working with researchers to deploy technology, like GoPro cameras, to record fish and invertebrate activity. The video footage is then analyzed to study how animals use aquaculture structures and natural habitats as shelter or foraging grounds.

LEARN MORE about our work for people and nature along Washington's coasts at **www.washingtonnature.org/oceans**.

The Nature Conservancy Washington

Sea Grant Washington

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