

EXPLORING AND EXPANDING MICHIGAN'S AQUACULTURE INDUSTRY

INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

Aquaculture has grown tremendously on a global scale in recent decades and now meets nearly half the world's seafood demand. Projections indicate that demand will only continue to grow.

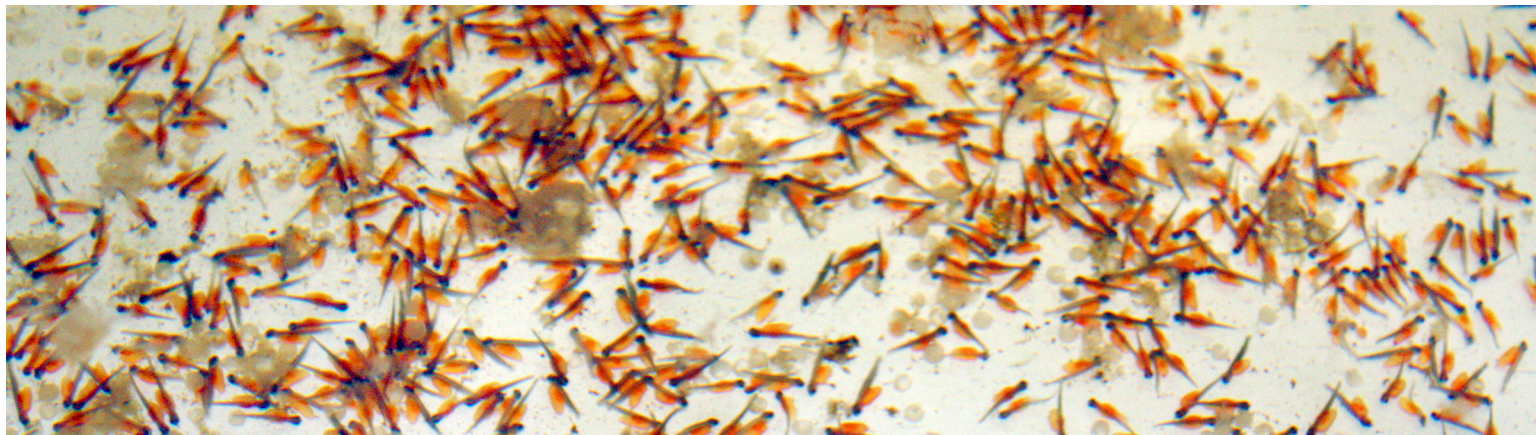
Michigan has the potential to support a vibrant aquaculture industry — it has abundant freshwater, affordable real estate, a need for new economic opportunities, and existing valuable expertise in fisheries, agriculture and food processing. However, commercial aquaculture development in Michigan has been stagnant for decades, and has not followed global trends even though the demand continues to increase.

Aquaculture in Michigan and the U.S. has been challenged by concerns over water pollution, fish disease, unintended introduction of non-native species, effects on wild species and food safety. Industry expansion has been restrained by real and perceived regulations designed to address these challenges. Potential and existing aquaculture practitioners also face difficulties, such as financing, marketing, connections with processors and distributors, and market competition.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will address the causes and consequences of the current underdeveloped aquaculture industry in Michigan, specifically production of seafood for human consumption. A comprehensive and thorough assessment of Michigan aquaculture will help the project team — along with potential and existing aquaculture practitioners, policy makers, the general public and other interested stakeholders — understand the complex interactions between aquaculture industry growth, regulatory control, economics and stakeholder risks and benefits.





PHASES

The project will be carried out in four phases over two years:

Phase I: Perform Needs Assessment

The assessment will be designed to determine the overall scope of the aquaculture issue. Status, attributes and barriers facing Michigan's aquaculture industry will be identified, as will current and potential stakeholders.

Phase II: Evaluate the Problem

The research team will analyze and categorize the information gathered in Phase I. They will evaluate the issues that were identified and assess what kind of impact they may have on the industry.

Phase III: Develop Resolution Strategies

Using the evaluation generated in Phase II, develop and vet strategies for expanding Michigan's aquaculture activities into a sustainable seafood production industry.

Phase IV: Develop and Initiate Strategic Plan

The information that has been gathered, assessed and evaluated will be incorporated into a written strategic action plan designed to expand Michigan's current aquaculture activities.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the two-year research period, the team intends to have identified what critical elements are restricting Michigan's current commercial aquaculture activities; what actions must be taken to address the situation; and what benefits aquaculture could contribute to Michigan.

The project will provide:

- A written strategic plan for expanding Michigan's aquaculture activities into a sustainable seafood production industry, which can be used as a guide for future planning and implementation.
- A better understanding of sustainable aquaculture and benefits associated with seafood, in general, by stakeholders.
- Better stakeholder understanding related to sustainable aquaculture in Michigan and how this will be beneficial to the state.

GET INVOLVED

Project collaborators and partnerships are expected to involve a wide range of people and organizations including Michigan Sea Grant, Farm Bureau, seafood processors and distributors, seafood retailers and national, state and local aquaculture and agricultural groups, among others.

Stakeholder meetings and workshops will be held during the second year of the project. The research team also expects to participate in town hall meetings, a Michigan seafood show and "Ag Day" at the state capital, as well as other events that may draw stakeholders.

For more information about the project and upcoming public meetings, contact Joe Colyn or visit the project web page.



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