

The Bay Scallop, *Argopecten irradians*

Range and Habitat

Range: Nova Scotia to northern Florida, Texas
Salinity: 25 to 35 psu
Depth: Shallow subtidal to 20 m
Habitat: Estuaries; associated with seagrass
Size: 40 mm to 95 mm



Commercial Importance

Commercial populations in Florida estuaries were extirpated by intense harvest pressure and decline in water quality. Recreational harvesting is currently allowed in a limited area (seasonal and bag limits apply). Commercial aquaculture is limited to New England.

Ecological Importance

Scallops are filter feeders and thus clear suspended particles and phytoplankton out of the water. This filtering activity removes primary production from the water column and increases local water clarity. This in turn increases the depth to which light can penetrate, benefitting seagrass. Healthy seagrass beds support viable scallop populations by providing refuge from predators. Scallops can only survive and reproduce in areas of good water quality and are therefore considered “bioindicators”.

Recovery & Restoration



There is currently significant interest in restoring bay scallop populations to Florida estuaries for both recreational and environmental benefit. The Gulf Shellfish Institute can support the following capabilities to any group interested in scallop restoration projects:

- Production of larval or juvenile scallops in commercial hatcheries
- Seed grown on commercial leases (state-owned submerged land) until desired size is attained
- Planting seed at desired density
- Follow-up monitoring of growth and survival, and environmental parameters



GULF SHELLFISH INSTITUTE
Research for Sustainable Aquaculture & Healthy Ecosystems