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N.H. Fisherman Receives Grant To Improve Wild Mussel Collection And Harvesting Technologies

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NH Sea Grant

March 27, 2008

DURHAM, N.H. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has awarded an \$80,000 grant to New Hampshire fisherman Andy Lang to continue his work with wild mussel aquaculture.

Lang is the recipient of the grant through the USDA Small Business Innovation Research program. His recent efforts to culture wild mussels on submerged lines offshore from the N.H. coastline are the first of its kind and have proven successful. The product is currently marketed as "Isles of Shoals Supremes" in local fish markets. Lang's grant is building on seven years of submerged mussel culture technology development and transfer conducted by the University of New Hampshire's Atlantic Marine Aquaculture Center.

Ken La Valley, NH Sea Grant commercial fisheries specialist, says the grant will help to improve the methods of wild mussel "seed" (juveniles) collection technology for offshore use. Currently, some of the traditional lines used in offshore mussel aquaculture need to be used to help collect the mussel seed, which can cause inefficiencies in the process. Lang and La Valley will be developing alternative gear that utilizes different lines for seed collection and the grow-out phase for adult mussels.

In addition, the SBIR grant will allow for the optimization of mussel handling from harvest through processing. Because these mussels grow quickly, their shells are thinner, La Valley explains. When they go through the normal processing machinery, there can be almost 40% breakage of the mussel shells and therefore creates product losses. Equipment calibration, along with improved mussel storage and handling techniques, will also be evaluated in the upcoming months.

For more information, please contact Ken La Valley at 603.862.4343 or ken.lavalley@unh.edu.

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