

WHY WE NEED ANOTHER OYSTER FARM

September 26, 2021

For all of the promise which came with the introduction of trout and salmon aquaculture in the 80s, they arrived with significant problems...habitat degradation, higher than expected costs, high energy consumption, and real concerns about GMOs. Not so with oysters. In fact, oyster farms in the Maritimes began a century ago and continue to produce a sustainable product with an enduring market.

The reason is the Maritimes offer the very best growing conditions in the world when taste is the goal. Sure, that sounds like a stretch. Taste is a personal thing and there are as many varieties of oysters as there are varieties of wine, but look at the alternatives. Oysters are faster growing in the US and in France, as are the imports from Japan which are grown in BC, but they taste decidedly different; some say they leave a 'tinny' after-taste. Consumer preference is overwhelmingly tilted towards oysters grown in cool salt estuaries like Antigonish Harbour. What the oysters of Antigonish Harbour (and the ones from similar bays in PEI and NB) have over those other areas, is a briny taste. Side-by-side-by-side, the cocktail crowd will always choose a Maritime oyster for that reason.

It would be a shame to limit the farming of such tasty and sustainable oysters when there is still room for additional leases in Antigonish Harbour. We should encourage the expansion of this low-tech industry which offers a product world-famous for its taste as well as an honest profit for those involved; all that and none of the negative effects listed above.

Allan Billard