

Species Profile: 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 eliminated by overharvesting 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 are able to clear suspended particles (phytoplankton) out of the water at a high rate. This filtering activity removes primary production from the water column and increases water clarity. This in turn increases the depth to which light can penetrate, benefitting sea grasses. Healthy seagrass beds in turn support viable scallop populations. Scallops are sensitive bio-indicator organisms; thus they can only survive and reproduce in areas with good water quality.

Role in Environmental Restoration

There is currently significant interest in restoring bay scallop populations to Florida estuaries for both recreational and environmental benefit.



The Gulf Shellfish Institute offers 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