



*Land & Sea Together is building a network of services and opportunities to reduce stress for Fisheries, Forestry, and Farming (FFF) enterprises, workers, and their families in Rhode Island*  
[www.landandseatogether.org](http://www.landandseatogether.org)

# Aquaculture Resource Guide

A Collection of Resources for Rhode Island Aquaculture Farmers

*Prepared by the Center for Mediation & Collaboration RI*

*Funded through the USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Grant*

*in partnership with the RI Department of Environmental Management Division of Agriculture*

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## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Forestry, Fisheries, and Farming (FFF) communities keep Rhode Islanders fed and tend our landscapes. But workers in these fields often face challenging and unpredictable conditions with limited support. Together we aim to offer services in the languages you speak, and seek out providers who understand natural resource sector challenges and reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of the FFF communities.

Our goal is to provide a collection of practical, up-to-date financial and mental health resilience materials for aquaculture businesses and individuals in the state of Rhode Island, and for the people and organizations who support the forestry sector.

This is a collaborative, living document, so please be in touch if you would like to add an organization, tool, resource, opportunity, or modify language in our guide about your programming. We welcome feedback, and we recognize that this guide is not exhaustive, but is hopefully a great place to start when looking for help. Our intention is that this document is shared widely within the networks we are working to establish.

For more information, to apply for relief grants as funds become available, to join our mailing list for events, new opportunities, or to contact us, please visit our website at: [www.landandseatogether.org](http://www.landandseatogether.org).

*First and foremost, please reach out- We want to hear from you, and we are here for you.*

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

**Growers. YOU are the most important piece of equipment on the water.** Regular maintenance - and critical repairs - help keep both you and your business running smoothly. Please know that help is available for you in Rhode Island, to support your physical and mental health.

1. **Are you in crisis? Call or text the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline now, at 988.** Both services are free, confidential, and available 24/7.
2. **[Land & Sea Together](http://www.landandseatogether.org) is offering free access to [Coastline EAP](#) for all farm, forestry, and fisheries professionals (and their families) in the state.** An EAP, or “Employee Assistance Program,” is a voluntary and confidential resource

connecting individuals and families with financial and personal services in the community. Services include referrals for child and elder care, health and wellness consultations, financial consultations, up to *3 FREE counseling sessions* with a licensed provider, and more. **Call 1-800-445-1195 to learn more, and tell them you're calling with "Land & Sea Together."**

3. The [AMOR](#) Support Line (401-675-1414) is a "multilingual (currently English & Spanish) line of volunteer operators that connects community members to AMOR's network of services, including comprehensive mental health care, legal support, court accompaniment, community support, transportation, and interpretation." AMOR is an alliance of grassroots organizations, providing community support in Rhode Island and Southern New England for victims of hate crimes and state-sponsored violence.
4. **Struggling with substance use? This crisis affects individuals and families across the state, and you are not alone.**
  - a. Referrals and support are available through Land & Sea Together's helpline, in conjunction with [Coastline EAP](#). **Call 1-800-445-1195, 24/7, to learn more.**
  - b. [SAMHSA](#) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) offers a National Helpline, at **1-800-662-4357**. The helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7 information service, available in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.
  - c. At [Prevent Overdose RI](#), you can learn more about treatment options across Rhode Island. Visit their website to learn more about [Safe Stations](#) (fire and police stations across the state where you can drop in 24/7 to get free and welcoming access to treatment and recovery support services), recovery centers, and more. Rhode Island also offers buprenorphine, a medicine used for opioid addiction, over the phone. You can find out more information by calling the Buprenorphine 24/7 Hotline at **401-606-5456**.

## FUNDING YOUR ENTERPRISE: GRANTS, LOANS, AND SUPPORT

**Aquaculture farmers need access to capital.** Most folks use a combination of grants and loans to acquire infrastructure, make new purchases and improvements, and

improve the viability of their businesses.

1. Aquaculture farmers can access state and federal **grant funding** from a number of entities.
  - a. [DEM Rhode Island LASA \(Land and Seafood Act\) Grant](#)
  - b. [NOAA Funding Opportunities and Grants](#)
  - c. [National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Fisheries Innovation Fund](#)
  - d. [USDA NIFA Special Research Grants Program Aquaculture Research](#)
  
2. Aquaculture farmers can access public and private **loan programs** from a number of entities across the Northeast. Keep in mind that interest rates and conditions may vary.
  - a. NOAA's [Fisheries Finance Program \(FFP\)](#) provides long-term fixed rate loans for the fishing industry. The Northeast Financial Branch is based in Gloucester, MA and can be reached at **978-281-9202**.
  - b. [Fish 2.0](#) connects sustainable fisheries businesses with potential investors.
  - c. [U.S. Small Business Administration](#) provides information on federal loan programs and offers free business counseling.
  - d. [Farm Credit East](#) provides loans for commercial aquaculture in the Northeast.
  - e. [USDA Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honey Bees, and Farm-Raised Fish \(ELAP\)](#) ELAP provides financial assistance to eligible producers of livestock, honeybees and farm-raised fish for losses due to disease, certain adverse weather events or loss conditions, including blizzards and wildfires, as determined by the Secretary.
  - f. [NRCS \(Natural Resources Conservation Services\) Funding](#)

## LEGAL & TAX HELP

Rhode Island aquaculturists can access **free** or **low-cost** legal help from the following organizations:

1. [Legal Food Hub](#) offers a free service that connects eligible Rhode Island food producers with volunteer attorneys who can provide pro bono services related to farm succession planning. Eligibility requirements available on their website. Our Rhode Island contact is Francesca Gallo. You can reach her at [legalfoodhub@clf.org](mailto:legalfoodhub@clf.org).

2. All aquaculture producers are also eligible for thirty minutes of free legal advice through Coastline EAP. **Call 1-800-445-1195 to learn more.**
3. [Farm Credit East](#) offers long-term tax planning, with expertise in commercial fisheries and aquaculture tax law. They “generally charge by the number of hours needed for tax planning and/or filing your tax return. The cost of our service is dependent on the complexity of your operation.” If cost is prohibitive, reach out to us at [www.landandseatogether.org](http://www.landandseatogether.org) and we can explore additional options.

## SUCCESSION PLANNING & MEDIATION SERVICES

**As Rhode Island aquaculture farmers consider retirement, and the future of their businesses, it is critical that families come together and establish a transfer plan.**

This can be an intense and sometimes emotional process, especially without an established successor. Take a deep breath. There are a number of organizations and resources that can help.

1. [Land & Sea Together](#) offers farm succession planning services and a connection of network partners who specialize in various stages of the succession planning process. Reach out to our Succession Program Specialist, Laurel Witri, by emailing [laurel@cmcri.org](mailto:laurel@cmcri.org).
2. The Center for Mediation & Collaboration RI offers [free mediation services](#) to all aquaculture producers in the state, in partnership with the USDA. Mediators help bring all stakeholders together to work through the issues that matter to them (e.g. questions about possession, debt, equity, neighbor disputes, and more). Reach out to CMCRI at 401-273-9999, or at [info@cmcri.org](mailto:info@cmcri.org), to learn more.
3. [Legal Food Hub](#) offers a free service that connects eligible Rhode Island farmers with volunteer attorneys who can provide pro bono services related to farm succession planning. Eligibility requirements available on their website. Our Rhode Island contact is Francesca Gallo. You can reach her at [legalfoodhub@clf.org](mailto:legalfoodhub@clf.org).
4. [Sea Grant Alaska](#) offers a helpful publication on how to make a direct transfer of your business.

5. [Louisiana Direct Seafood](#) has a number of videos on retirement and business succession planning.

## LABOR

**Attracting and retaining skilled labor is a major challenge for many managers and owners. How and where are folks finding reliable employees? How and where are employees finding supportive environments where they can learn and grow?**

1. Post and search on the following employment job boards and email listservs:
  - a. [East Coast Shellfish Growers Association Listserv](#)
  - a. [RI Fishing Industry Listserv](#)
  - b. [N.E. Ag Exchange](#)
2. Each spring, Shellfish RI offers an [Aquaculture Training Program](#) aimed at entry-level farm workers. “The program is offered each spring and is a 5-week hands-on training aimed at entry-level farm workers. Key employment areas include essential job skills, basic boating skills, boating tools and maintenance, shellfish biology, dealer and shipper skills and ServSafe kitchen manager certification.”

For more information, email Charles Westcott at [cwestcott@edexri.org](mailto:cwestcott@edexri.org).

## ACCESSING CRITICAL RESOURCES AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

**Health insurance, child care, and retirement.** Let’s talk about building a secure financial and personal life in one of the most expensive states in the nation.

### 1. Health Insurance

- a. Compare plans on the state-based marketplace, [HealthSource RI](#). Farmers can access health and dental insurance from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, and Delta Dental.
- b. The [Rhode Island Office of Healthy Aging](#) offers help navigating Medicare coverage and programs. Call **1-888-884-8721** for more information.

### 2. Child Care & Elder Care

- a. The [Rhode Island Early Learning Council](#) offers a full list of early childhood

state programs, including Head Start and BrightStars.

- b. Many farming and fishing families may be eligible for the [Child Care Assistance Program](#) (CCAP), which can subsidize child care for RI residents.
- c. [BrightStars RI](#) “assists families in finding quality early care, education and afterschool programs.” Visit their website or call 1-855-398-7605 to speak with a referral specialist.
- d. [Land & Sea Together](#) has limited funding available for vouchers for DHS licensed childcare facilities and for licensed Elder Care for members of the FFF community. Referrals and support are also available through Land & Sea Together’s helpline, in conjunction with [Coastline EAP](#). **Call 1-800-445-1195 to learn more.**

### 3. Retirement

- a. The [Alaska Fishermen’s Network](#) has a helpful post highlighting the options for planning for retirement in the fisheries industry.
- b. [Louisiana Direct Seafood](#) has a number of videos on retirement and business succession planning.
- c. This webinar from Penn State, “Retirement Planning for Farmers,” is another excellent place to start:  
[https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/1\\_wumxg2nh](https://psu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/1_wumxg2nh)

### 4. Social Services

- a. [The Rhode Island Association of Community Action Agencies](#) is a statewide network of Community Action Agencies (CAAs), which provides a range of programs to help low to moderate income families across the state. Services include rent and mortgage assistance, income tax preparation assistance, senior services, and more. Call **401-921-4968** or fill out this [form](#) to find out what services you may be eligible for.
- b. [AMOR RI](#), Alliance to Mobilize Our Resistance, is “an alliance of grassroots organizations, providing community support in Rhode Island and southern New England for victims of hate crimes and state-sponsored violence... The AMOR Support Line (**401-675-1414**) is a 24-hour multilingual (currently English & Spanish) line that connects community members to AMOR’s network of services, including comprehensive mental health care, legal support, court accompaniment, community support, transportation, and

interpretation.”

- c. To find **local food assistance**, visit the Rhode Island Food Bank’s [website](#).
- d. If you are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, the [Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness](#) has a large list of statewide resources available.
- e. [Land & Sea Together](#) Referrals and support are also available through Land & Sea Together’s helpline, in conjunction with [Coastline EAP](#). **Call 1-800-445-1195 to learn more.**

## NON-PROFIT AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

**You don’t have to do this alone.** There are many existing professional organizations in Rhode Island across the aquaculture community, offering a wide range of resources and connections. Visit their websites to learn more!

### **Rhode Island:**

[Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island](#) is “the home for the Ocean State’s commercial fishing community... [They] seek to preserve the sanctity of our community, the solvency of our small business and the sustainability of the fishery resource. The Commercial Fisheries Center of Rhode Island is our headquarters to bring fishermen, scientists, managers, and elected officials together in a collaborative effort to improve our fisheries and our understanding of the marine environment so that the proud heritage of our industry continues nobly through future generations.”

[DEM- Rhode Island](#) is the state’s Department of Environmental Management, and its mission is to “protect, restore, and promote our environment to ensure Rhode Island remains a wonderful place to live, visit, and raise a family.” The Division of Marine Fisheries offers information about regulations, lease applications, research, and more.

[Coastal Resources Center at URI](#) “works to develop innovative methods of research, extension and outreach to sustainably manage valuable fisheries and aquaculture resources in Rhode Island, the United States and around the globe.”

[Ocean State Shellfish Cooperative](#) “The mission of the Ocean State Shellfish Cooperative is to provide the freshest, highest quality Northeast oysters year-round, to support the preservation of our Rhode Island’s coastal ecosystems, to promote the benefits of



sustainable aquaculture, wild fresh-caught seafood, and farm-fresh locally-grown food, as well as to educate the public on the rich history and importance of oyster farming in the Ocean State.”

[East Coast Shellfish Growers Association](#) “The ECSGA represents over 1300 shellfish farmers up and down the East Coast and the Gulf, from Maine to Texas. These proud stewards of the marine environment produce sustainable farmed shellfish while providing thousands of jobs in rural coastal towns. The ECSGA informs policy makers and regulators to protect a way of life.” ECSGA offers growers resources on marketing, employment, health concerns, extension contacts, and more.

[Farm Fresh RI](#) is a non-profit organization with a new hub in Providence, Farm Fresh’s mission is “to grow a local food system that values the environment, health, and quality of life of the farmers and eaters in our region.” This mission is expressed through Community Access Programs, which include Farmers Markets, Farm to School and Community Education, Bonus Bucks, and Harvest Kitchen’s culinary job training program; and Food System Enterprise Services, which include Market Mobile and Harvest Kitchen’s food production and processing.

[Ocean State Community Seafood](#) educates the Rhode Island community about local fishermen, and the state’s abundance of diversified species of locally-caught seafood that can be purchased directly from fishermen’s boats.

[Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council](#) “is a management agency with regulatory functions. Its primary responsibility is for the preservation, protection, development and where possible the restoration of the coastal areas of the state via the implementation of its integrated and comprehensive coastal management plans and the issuance of permits for work with the coastal zone of the state.”

[Rhode Island Sea Grant](#) is located at the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, “supports research, outreach, and education programs designed to foster the resiliency of local and regional communities and marine environments... Through network building and collaboration, fisheries and aquaculture specialists connect industry and consumers with the best available science to build vibrant local markets for Rhode Island fishery and aquaculture products through ecosystem-based management practices, as well as continue its commitment to provide training for safe seafood processing.”

[Rhode Island Shellfisherman’s Association](#) is “dedicated to the improvement of the working conditions of shellfishermen in RI, to the enhancement and preservation of Narragansett Bay, and the promotion of shellfish products.”

[Shellfish RI](#) offers a number of resources, from marketing tools to a farm worker training program. Visit their website to learn more!

[Ocean State Aquaculture Association](#) “promotes the interests of practicing commercial aquaculturists in the State of Rhode Island, and through a program of public education and active participation in policy formation to create an atmosphere in which a commercial aquaculture industry may develop and grow.”

The [Tomaquag Museum](#) is Rhode Island’s only Indigenous cultural education center and museum. Tomaquag’s Indigenous Empowerment Network (IEN) “strives to eradicate poverty in the Indigenous Community of Rhode Island through education, cultural competency, job training, employment, small business incubation, addressing social justice, and building equity through Tomaquag Museum and our ever-expanding network of partners.”

[URI Cooperative Extension - Aquaculture](#) provides “the most current science-based information in sustainable and profitable aquacultural crop production practices to growers through site visits, periodic publications, workshops and more.”

#### **New England and Beyond:**

[Local Catch Network](#) “is a community-of-practice made up of seafood harvesters, technical assistance providers, organizers, and researchers from across North America who are committed to strengthening local and regional seafood systems through community supported fisheries and direct seafood marketing.” LCN offers technical assistance, USDA LAMP grant support, a business accelerator program, and many other resources. Their shared email list is vibrant and collaborative.

[Northeast Seafood Coalition](#) is “a non-profit membership organization representing commercial fishing entities in the northeastern United States on political and policy issues affecting their interests as participants in the multispecies (groundfish) fishery... [They strive] to find creative solutions that work to rebuild fish stocks while preserving family-owned fishing businesses and a diverse groundfish fishing fleet.”

[SEMAP \(Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership\)](#) “dedicated to preserving and expanding access to local food and sustainable farming through research and

education.” They provide a monthly newsletter highlighting jobs, opportunities, upcoming events, host workshops and conferences, and connect consumers with local producers.

## A VERY BIG THANK YOU:

African Alliance of Rhode Island  
Center for Mediation & Collaboration RI  
Coastline EAP  
Commercial Fisheries Council RI  
Datacorp  
East Coast Shellfish Growers  
Farm Fresh RI  
Hope & Main  
Legal Food Hub  
NOFA-RI  
Ocean State Aquaculture Association  
RI Commerce  
RI-DEM

RI Farm Bureau  
RI Food Policy Council  
RI Land Trust Council  
Rhode Island Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA)  
South County Health  
Southside Community Land Trust  
The Carrot Project  
Tomaquag Museum  
University of Rhode Island  
Young Farmers Network  
**And those of you who have been involved with us since 2022!**

## THANK YOU TO OUR 2022 WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Mason Billings  
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Heidi Quinn  
Bob Rheault  
Jesse Rye  
Kate Sayles  
Julianne Stelmaszyk  
Lisa Townson  
Laurel Witri

## THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS:

USDA/NIFA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Project Award No. 2021-70035-35721 in partnership with the RI Department of Environmental Management Division of Agriculture

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) project 2019-70028-30464 and 2020-70028-through the National Young Farmers Coalition, in partnership with the RI Department of Environmental Management Division of Agriculture, 2021-2023.

Please note: Information included in this document was sourced from various partner websites and through a collaborative process. Please respect the integrity of the guide, and request changes through the Land & Sea Together website as opposed to copying and modifying the guide. The most up-to-date versions will live on [www.landandseattogether.org](http://www.landandseattogether.org) for free download. When appropriate, please credit Land & Sea Together, a program of the Center for Mediation and Collaboration, for the creation of this document.