



Catalina Sea Ranch harvested its first batch of offshore mussels at the end of July. Photo: Catalina Sea Ranch

# With Trump's blessing, US offshore mussel farm plans to double in size

Company banking on support of administration to make its plans a reality.

October 2nd, 2017 12:13 GMT Updated October 2nd, 2017 12:15 GMT

California-based Catalina Sea Ranch (CSR) is filing a request next month to double its offshore mussel farm acreage.

It harvested its first batch at the end of July from its 100-acre farm six miles from Huntington Beach, California.

Washington-based Taylor Shellfish -- who is an investor in the operation -- supplied 3,700 pounds of juvenile mussels last year for this project.

CEO Phil Cruver told **IntraFish** he's optimistic about increasing the size of the current farm, in part because he seems to have the backing of the current administration.

"The Department of Commerce is very supportive of offshore aquaculture, and Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross is intent on reducing the \$14 billion (€11.8 billion) seafood trade deficit," he said.

"A member of [President Trump's] transition team called me and said, 'You have the only permit out there, we have to grow more, aquaculture is the answer, show us how to get around these regulatory hurdles.'"

CSR officially began its drive to become the first US offshore shellfish farmer in 2011 at the urging of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), received approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2012 and the California Coastal Commission in 2014. The USACE is the sole regulator for offshore aquaculture permits in federal waters in compliance with US Coast Guard regulations.

Cruver said his company's eight to 10-year plan is to increase its mussel farm to 1,000 offshore acres.

"Our farm sits on the San Pedro shelf in 26,000 acres of US federal waters so there's room to grow," he said. "If we scale up to 1,000 acres, we could produce 2 million pounds of mussels per month and with a farmgate price of \$2.25 (€1.90) per pound, this could be a half a billion dollar industry."

He said mussels are a "cash crop," because they grow fast with little maintenance and offer a profit margin of about 50 percent.

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