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## **Oyster Mariculture Program Launches in Texas** *Rep. Hunter to host online symposium Sept. 16*

**(CORPUS CHRISTI, TX)** – The State of Texas this month launched the oyster mariculture industry as directed by legislation authored by State Rep. Todd Hunter of Corpus Christi, providing an opportunity for significant economic activity along the Coastal Bend and across the state.

The new industry along the Texas coast allows people to lease public waters to grow and harvest oysters commercially. Texas had been the only coastal state in the country that did not engage in cultivated oyster mariculture, forcing Texas restaurants to import farm-grown half-shell oysters from other states.

“The time has come for these Texas-grown oysters to be served in restaurants across this country,” Rep. Hunter said. “We have worked for years to bring oyster mariculture to Texas because the economic and cultural benefits for our region are limitless. This will allow us to share more of the Coastal Bend with the rest of the state and country.”

Rep. Hunter, who authored House Bill 1300 last year to bring the industry to Texas, will host an online symposium on this new industry from 2 to 3 p.m. September 16. The summit, also sponsored by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, will be available for the public to view at <http://bit.ly/oystersummit>.

“A&M-Corpus Christi is proud to continue working with our community partners across South Texas to build a successful oyster mariculture industry,” said Texas A&M-Corpus Christi President and CEO Kelly M. Miller. “We are excited to host this symposium as a next step in this process and look forward to a productive exchange of ideas.”

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recently [launched a website](#) allowing the public to apply to open an oyster farm. The Department has also posted [an FAQ page](#) to provide more information about this new Texas industry.

Oyster mariculture operations will be sited in areas ensuring compatibility with the Texas coastal marine environment. Methods of culture will be those well-accepted in other areas of the world. Unlike other forms of mariculture, the oysters grown in Texas water will rely entirely on naturally occurring microalgae for growth.

“Texas is renowned not just for our abundance of natural resources, but for our ability to responsibly harness these resources to the benefit of our citizens,” said Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush. “I want to congratulate Representative Hunter on the



passage of his legislation that allows oyster mariculture in Texas. Oyster beds are critical to maintaining healthy water circulation in our coastal waters. HB 1300 embodies the Texas spirit of economic independence and environmental sustainability.”

Rep. Hunter has worked closely with business owners in the Corpus Christi area to build support for oyster mariculture, recognizing the many ways it could benefit the area’s restaurant and tourism industries.

“The Texas Cultivated Oyster Mariculture Industry truly represents the collaborative efforts of Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Harte Research Institute, The Coastal Conservation Association, The Texas Restaurant Association, The Coastal Bend business community and of course State Representative Todd Hunter,” said Brad Lomax, owner of Waterstreet Restaurants in Corpus Christi. “Two years ago Rep. Hunter charged our ‘Grow Texas Oysters’ group with the mission of bringing back the Coastal Bend Oyster....and to do so in a way that creates economic opportunity, preserves environmental sustainability, and enhances the recreational/tourism experience. Under Todd's leadership and with his guidance, The Texas Cultivated Oyster Mariculture program has put us on the path to ‘mission accomplished!’”

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### **About Rep. Todd Hunter**

Todd Hunter is the state representative for Texas House District 32 in Nueces County, TX. He is a member of the Criminal Jurisprudence Committee, which addresses important issues pertaining to criminal law, as well as a member of the State Affairs Committee, which deals with significant matters of state policy, ranging from the administration of the state government to cybersecurity.

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