Oyster aquaculture could offer enhanced oyster production as well as provide environmental benefits, but there has been some public concern over its implementation on the Texas Gulf Coast.

The pros and cons of oyster aquaculture will be addressed at a program sponsored by the Port Isabel/South Padre Island Shell Club to be held 10 a.m. on March 30 at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Coastal Studies Laboratory, 100 Marine Lab Drive, South Padre Island.

The program will feature Dr. John Scarpa, associate professor at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi and Texas Sea Grant-funded researcher, who will look at potential solutions to oyster aquaculture concerns. His talk will be followed by a public discussion of oyster aquaculture.

For more than 30 years, Scarpa has been involved in aquaculture research, teaching and training, which has included supporting the $15-million hard-clam-culture industry in Florida during his 20-plus years at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. He is currently president-elect of the National Shellfisheries Association and is leading efforts to establish oyster aquaculture in Texas.

“Oyster aquaculture produces the vast majority of oysters consumed by humans worldwide, but Texas is the only state on the Gulf Coast with no regulatory policy for commercial oyster aquaculture,” said Tony Reisinger, the Texas Sea Grant-funded coastal and marine resources agent for Cameron County. Reisinger also holds a joint appointment with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

She said a few of the concerns with bringing oyster aquaculture to the Texas coastal region are potential interference with boating traffic and the aesthetics of having oyster stakes near coastal residential areas.

“But these concerns have been addressed in other coastal states and solutions can be found for Texas. Having oyster aquaculture would be a real economic boon for the Texas Gulf Coast,” Reisinger said.

The event will also be broadcast live online at https://utrgv.zoom.us/j/160677994.

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