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Intelligence

# BlueTrace wins \$500K NOAA grant for traceability and marketing system

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

## BlueTrace received a Phase 1 SBIR grant from the NOAA SBIR Program to accelerate the development of an innovative Tide to Table Traceability and Marketing System

BlueTrace, the Maine-based shellfish aquaculture management platform formerly known as Oyster Tracker, has won a major grant from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The company received a (U.S.) \$500,000 SBIR Phase 2 grant to expedite the development of an innovative Tide to Table Traceability and Marketing System that helps shellfish harvesters, farmers, dealers and distributors track their product seamlessly from harvest to consumption.

“The proposed work has strong commercial viability and has the potential to generate considerable cost-savings for shellfish producers and wholesalers,” one of the SBIR grant reviewers noted.

The [Small Business Innovation Research](https://www.sbir.gov/about) (<https://www.sbir.gov/about>) fund is a “highly competitive program that encourages domestic small businesses.” In 2020, BlueTrace received a Phase 1 SBIR grant from the NOAA SBIR Program, a funding stream that supports innovative research projects aligning with NOAA’s core mission of science, service, and stewardship. Tallying up SBIR grants and already reported venture investments and grants brings the total funds raised by BlueTrace to more than \$1.8 million.



BlueTrace received a (U.S.) \$500,000 SBIR Phase 2 grant to expedite the development of an innovative Tide to Table Traceability and Marketing System. Photo courtesy of BlueTrace.

With the funds, BlueTrace plans to add developers and seafood experts to its team “to address rising consumer expectations for seafood provenance and evolving regulations.” Emerging federal regulations, such as section 204 of the FDA’s Food Safety Modernization Act, are increasing compliance costs when the shellfish industry is experiencing significant labor shortages.



(<https://link.chtbl.com/aquapod>).

“The main reasons companies are signing on with us: regulatory compliance is getting more difficult and consumers want to know more about the provenance of their food,” said Wylllys “Chip” Terry, CEO of BlueTrace. “With the new regulations coming from the Food Safety Modernization Act, we believe that the industry is ripe for a major change.”

The company has more than 120 clients, including more than 100 farms and 20 distributors. Founded in 2018, BlueTrace focuses on making the seafood supply chain more efficient and safer by “digitizing key transactions and creating a seamless traceability chain.” Using the current BlueTrace system, shellfish producers and dealers track Key Data Elements for oysters, mussels, clams, geoducks and other shellfish from harvest through a complex chain of custody that often involves over five steps. Using the mobile BlueTrace system, users track food safety issues and produce mandated shellfish logs and tags. According to BlueTrace, the average client saves over 30 percent on compliance costs while improving accuracy and product safety.

“The industry has done an amazing job keeping folks safe and food moving, but with everyone having a mobile phone connected to the cloud, we can now do things that folks only dreamed of 10 years ago,” Terry told the *Advocate*.

<https://www.aquaculturealliance.org/advocate/can-handheld-dna-testing-technology-stand-up-to-seafood-fraud/>

A user-friendly traceability system designed for the mobile, wet, fast-paced environment of shellfish companies also benefits consumers. Such a system facilitates tracking the time and temperature of seafood from harvest to table, which means the risk of illnesses like *Vibrio* and other food-borne diseases will significantly decrease.

“A safer food chain is good for consumers and businesses,” said Terry. “BlueTrace has the team, technology and know-how to revolutionize tracking from tide to table. Thanks to the SBIR program, we can build a system specifically for the complexities of the seafood industry.”

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