



OYSTER RECOVERY  
PARTNERSHIP | ORP

2015 IMPACT REPORT





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# Dear Friends of the Chesapeake Bay,

Thank you for sharing our interest in the return of one of the Bay's most valuable native species – the Eastern Oyster. A national leader in oyster restoration, the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) is taking action in the areas of science, preservation and economic growth. Our mission is simple: plan, promote and implement science-based sustainable fisheries and shellfish management activities to enhance our environment, support our economy and preserve our cultural heritage.

Most of ORP's activities are focused on large-scale construction of oyster reefs. Oysters improve Bay health by filtering excess nutrients from the water, and their reefs create habitat for a multitude of marine life. Over the last two decades, our organization has increased its efficiency and effectiveness in handling the logistics necessary to plant hundreds of millions of oysters each season. ORP also strives to provide watermen and oyster farmers with harvest and economic stability, while supporting the rapidly expanding demand for sustainable seafood.

In 2015, with the help of our partners and generous donors, ORP planted 535 million oysters. The Shell Recycling Alliance had its most successful year to date, collecting 26,000 bushels of oyster shell from 300 member establishments. We orchestrated the planting of over 200,000 bushels of shell on public oyster reefs to rehabilitate fishing areas, helped improve the way watermen report finfish and crab harvests and celebrated the completion of the world's largest oyster restoration project in Harris Creek on Maryland's eastern shore. This year ORP strengthened its partnerships, supported sustainable fisheries management efforts and continued searching for innovative ways to improve Bay health in the years to come.

ORP continues to be recognized as a top-rated non-profit receiving the Maryland Nonprofit's Standards for Excellence award, the Guidestar Exchange Seal and is an approved nonprofit, with 1% for the Planet. Ninety-five percent of all donations go directly into recovery programs.

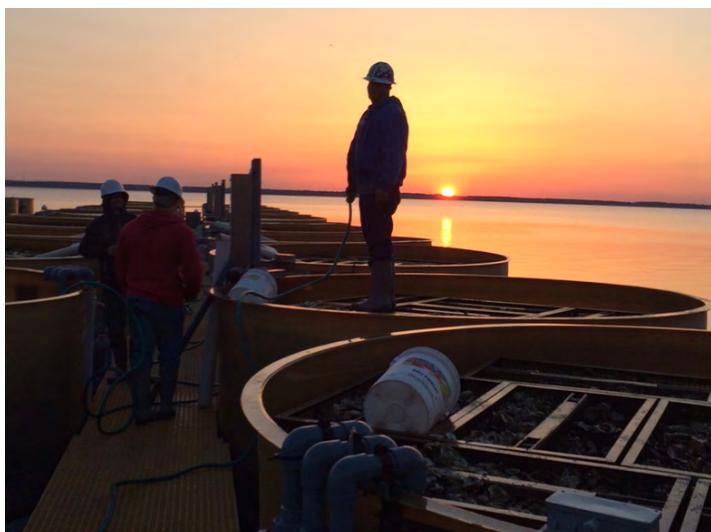
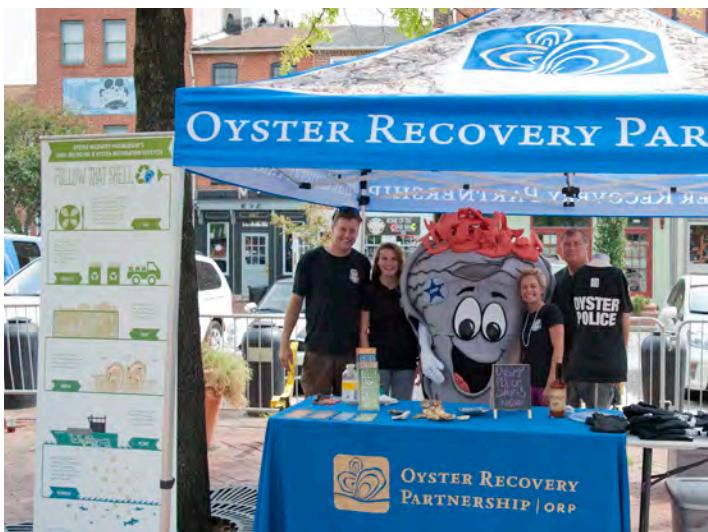
Thank you for joining us in our efforts,



**Jim Perdue** Chairman of the Board



**Stephan Abel** Executive Director



Photos, from top left: ORP staff members at ORP's booth at the annual Flying Dog BrewerySprint for Spat 0.1K race in Fells Point, Baltimore, MD | Sunrise over oyster setting tanks at Horn Point Oyster Hatchery in Cambridge, MD | ORP's oyster planting vessel, the Robert Lee, planting oysters in the Severn River near Annapolis, MD | One-year-old oysters | Oyster spat on shell being transported to the planting vessel, the Robert Lee, for loading | A three year old oyster reef in Harris Creek, MD

# Restoration in Maryland

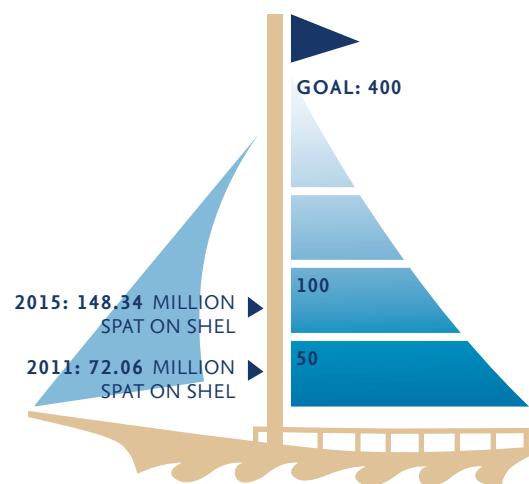
The Chesapeake Bay was once world famous for its vast oyster reefs. Now the population is a fraction of that, and each year the Bay loses more than 2,600 acres of oyster habitat. ORP works with state and federal government agencies, scientists, watermen and conservation organizations to restore reefs and maintain a viable future for this keystone species.

The seven-state Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and Executive Order 13508 – Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration calls for restoration of native oyster habitat and populations in ten tributaries by 2025. The three tributaries selected so far in Maryland are part of the Choptank River Complex on Maryland's eastern shore: Harris Creek, Little Choptank and Tred Avon



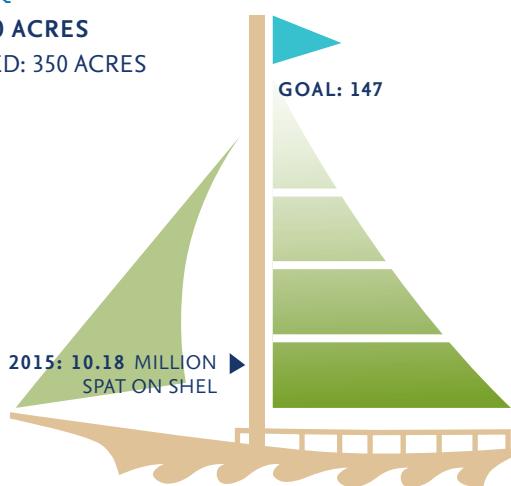
**Harris Creek**

**ACREAGE GOAL: 350 ACRES**  
**ACREAGE COMPLETED: 350 ACRES**



**Little Choptank**

**ACREAGE GOAL: 400 ACRES**  
**ACREAGE COMPLETED: 45.8 ACRES**



**Tred Avon**

**ACREAGE GOAL: 147 ACRES**  
**ACREAGE COMPLETED: 2.58 ACRES**

# Where We Work

The Oyster Recovery Partnership is not just about putting billions of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, we're also running the largest network of Shell Recycling Alliance members in the nation, co-managing the state's Marylanders Grow Oysters program, replenishing public oyster bars and providing aquaculture support and training.



# Shell Recycling Alliance

Natural oyster shell is the best material on which to raise new oysters and restore reefs. ORP developed the Shell Recycling Alliance to enable the public, restaurants and caterers to save this limited natural resource from going into landfills. It has become the largest network of restaurants recycling shell in the country.



**SHELL RECYCLING  
ALLIANCE<sup>SM</sup>**  
**SRA**  
OYSTER RECOVERY PARTNERSHIP

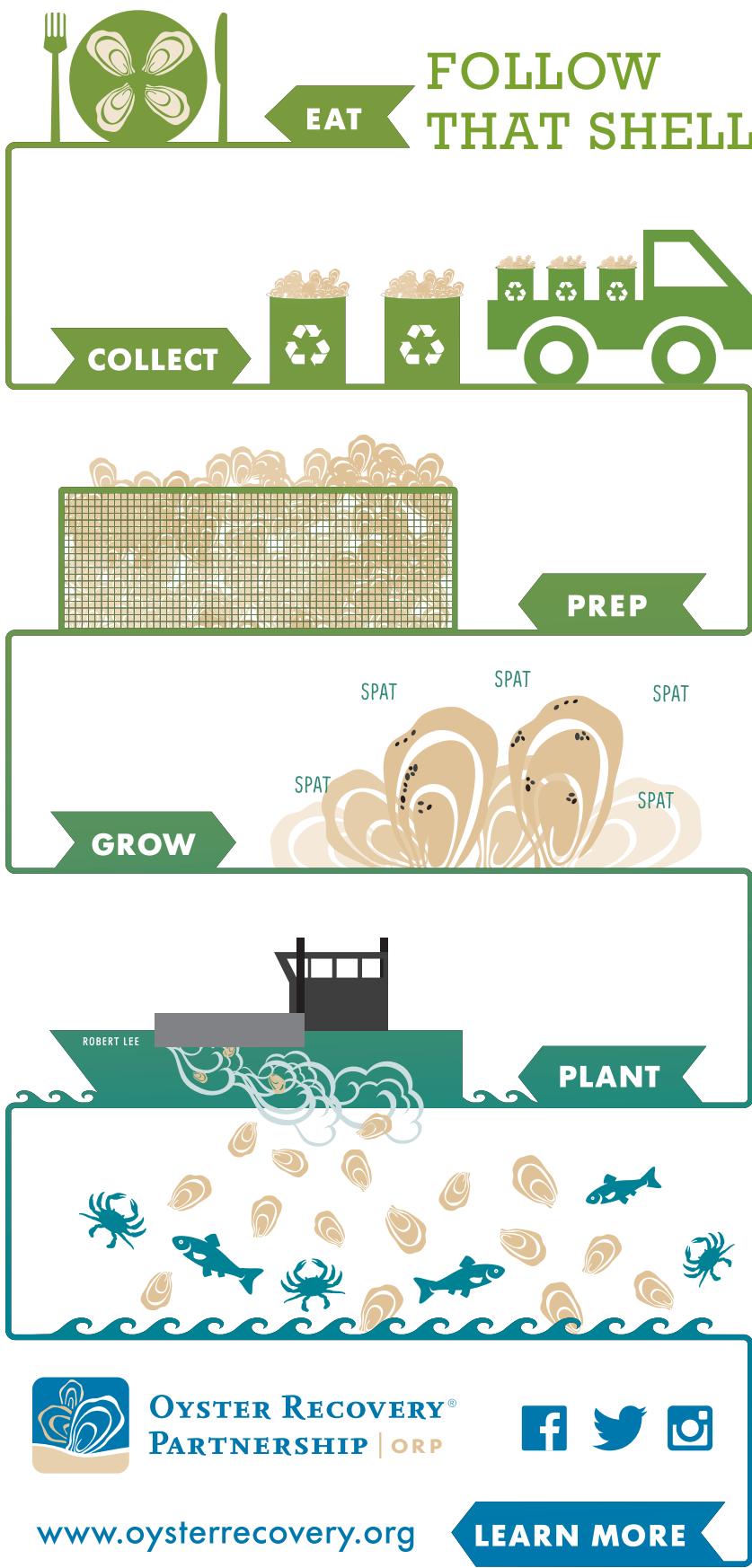


The Shell Recycling Alliance collected a record 26,000 bushels of oyster shell from 300 member establishments in 2015, a number that reflects an accelerated commitment by restaurants and other businesses to restore the Chesapeake Bay oyster population.

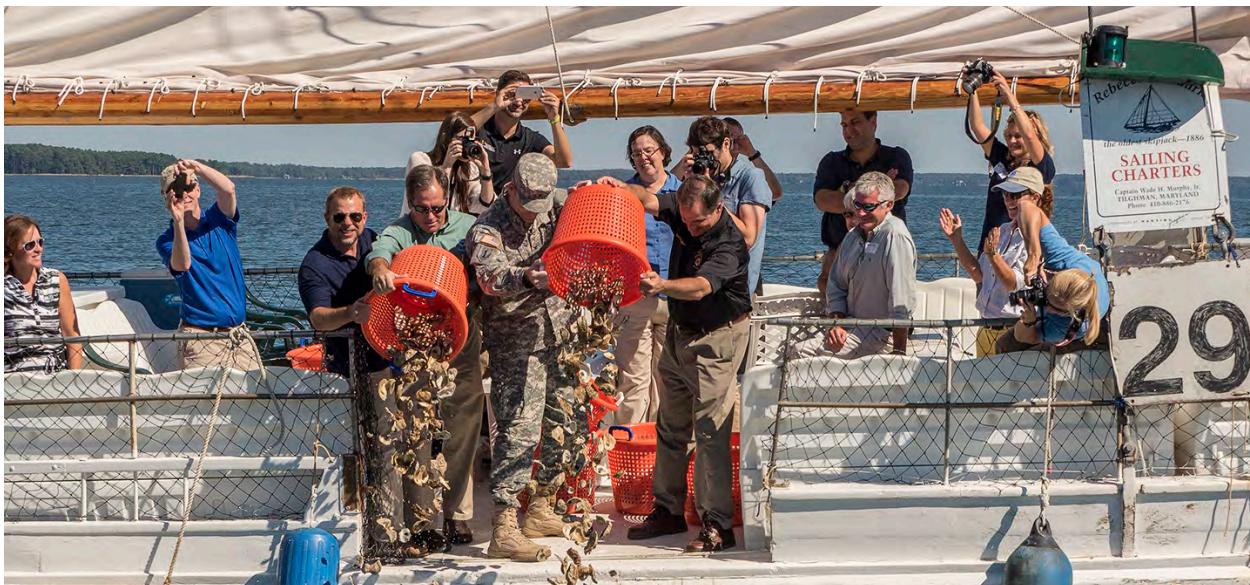
## TOP 10 PRODUCERS IN 2015

- Boatyard Bar and Grille** (Annapolis, MD)
- Captain White's Seafood City** (Washington DC)
- Congressional Seafood** (Jessup, MD)
- Faidley's Seafood** (Baltimore, MD)
- Jesse Taylor Seafood** (Washington DC)
- Mike's Crab House** (Annapolis, MD)
- Old Ebbitt Grill** (Washington DC)
- Rappahannock River Oyster Bar** (Washington DC)
- Ryleigh's Oyster** (Baltimore, MD)
- Ryleigh's Oyster** (Hunt Valley, MD)





**RESTORATION LIFE CYCLE**  
**SHELL RECYCLING & OYSTER**



Restoration partners aboard the skipjack Rebecca T. Ruark, ceremoniously dumping the last bushels of spat on shell in Harris Creek. From left: Colonel Edward Chamberlayne, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District; Stephan Abel, Executive Director, Oyster Recovery Partnership; Secretary Mark Belton, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and Stephanie Westby, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center

## Harris Creek Completion

September 15, 2015 marked a major milestone in the life of the Chesapeake Bay – the completion of Harris Creek oyster restoration project, the largest ever undertaken in the world. Two billion oysters were planted on 350 acres of oyster reefs – meeting the first of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's goals to restore oysters in 10 tributaries in the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

## Aquaculture Support and Training

Aquaculture is helping revitalize the oyster industry and bring the Bay's ecology back into balance. Thanks to the support of the Ratcliffe Foundation, ORP and the University of Maryland offer training and services to assist watermen in producing, managing and promoting their oysters and farms.

### OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS:

- 60+ growers** participated in the training program
- 30% of all watermen leaseholders** participated
- 715,000,000 spat on shell** have been produced



Shell bags are loaded in setting tanks and then set with oyster larvae



Watermen transporting oyster shell for planting on public oyster fishing grounds on behalf of the Maryland County Oyster Committees

## Public Oyster Fishery Programs

ORP strives to create sustainable management solutions for Maryland fisheries. In 2015, more than 200,000 bushels of shell and millions of spat on shell were planted on the public fishery shellfish areas.



## Electronic Reporting

Collaboratively working with Maryland Department of Natural Resources, ORP has enhanced the electronic commercial harvest reporting system, FACTS™, giving watermen the ability to report their daily Blue Crab and Striped Bass harvest using an electronic, web-based system. Commercial license holders have instant access to their harvest records and can transfer harvest quotas using the new system.

Commercial waterman, David Kirwan, electronically reporting his daily harvest of Blue Crab.

## Oyster Best Management Practices

Excess nutrients and sediment runoff affect Chesapeake Bay water quality and research has shown that oysters play an important role because of their filter-feeding capabilities. ORP is working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program Office to convene an expert panel to evaluate the use of oyster practices, including aquaculture and restoration, as a Best Management Practice .



Oysters filter the Bay's waters and in the process remove excess nitrogen and phosphorus



ORP's shell recycling crew delivers 250 bags of oyster spat to the St. Mary's River to support the Marylanders Grow Oysters program.

## Marylanders Grow Oysters

ORP co-manages the State's Marylanders Grow Oysters program from which thousands of waterfront homeowners grow millions of baby oysters in cages hanging from private piers. Homeowners from 33 tributaries and creeks around Maryland learn about the importance of oysters to the Bay's ecosystem as they safeguard young oysters during their vulnerable first year of life. Oysters and cages are distributed every August and September, and collected in May and June. The year-old oysters are then placed on local oyster sanctuary preserves where they continue to grow and flourish.



ORP's oyster mascot, Shelly, attends dozens of local events each year.



Students from Severn School visit an oyster sanctuary in the Choptank River.

## Education and Outreach

ORP is dedicated to educating the public about the importance of oysters and the role we all play in the Bay's overall recovery. Each year we participate in dozens of community events and festivals, collecting and recycling oyster shell for future restoration projects, staffing information tables and having our mascot Shelly interact with event attendees. ORP also collaborates with schools, camps, scout troops and clubs to deliver a wide range of educational services.

## Seafood Marketing

ORP is working with local watermen and seafood processors to promote and bring fresh, responsibly harvested seafood to local farmers' markets.



ORP staff members Bryan Gomes, left, and Paul Schurick sell fresh oysters harvested by local watermen at the Anne Arundel County Farmers' Market.

# Thank You to Our Restoration Partners

The Oyster Recovery Partnership relies on its many partners to assist in fulfilling their mission.



Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Maryland Watermen's Association

University of Maryland Paynter Lab

## MAJOR PARTNERS:

Charm City Run  
ClearShark H2O  
Finlandia Vodka

Flying Dog Brewery  
Maryland Grain Producers  
MOM's Organic Market

The Nature Conservancy  
Northrop Grumman  
The Ratcliffe Foundation

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