

25TH ANNIVERSARY IMPACT REPORT

8.5 BILLION OYSTERS PLANTED • 200,000+ BUSHELS RECYCLED



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
OF OYSTER RESTORATION

**OYSTER RECOVERY
PARTNERSHIP®**

— ORP —



Dear Friends of the Chesapeake Bay,

We are marking the Oyster Recovery Partnership’s silver anniversary by reflecting on all that we’ve accomplished over the last 25 years, including **planting 8.5 billion oysters and recycling 200,000 bushels of shell**. We’re also thinking ahead about what we can do to ensure the oyster stays at the center of Chesapeake Bay restoration in the coming decade – see “Oysters are our Future” inside.

Our success is thanks to a broad collaboration of government agencies, nonprofits, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES), private corporations, communities, and citizens like you. We are dedicated to collaboration and welcome partners and people who share our passion for a healthy Chesapeake Bay. We invite you to be a part of our movement by:

Supporting our work with a 25th anniversary donation online or using the enclosed envelope. Your donation will directly support planting oysters!

Eating oysters at hundreds of area restaurants that participate in ORP’s Shell Recycling Alliance. The shells are cleaned and reused to build reefs in the Bay.

Getting your community involved in grassroots projects like growing oysters at your dock or sponsoring a local Build-a-Reef campaign.

I am proud to be a part of the Oyster Recovery Partnership and support its mission to grow the economic and environmental value of oysters. I believe that, together, we are making a difference for the Chesapeake Bay.

Thank you for joining us in our efforts,



Jim Perdue
Jim Perdue Chairman of the Board

WHY OYSTERS?

Oysters provide important ecosystem services! As filter feeders, they consume nitrogen-containing compounds and other particulate matter, including sediments, from the water. A single, healthy adult oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day - that’s roughly the volume of a bathtub. **Imagine the water quality impact of billions of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay!**

Oysters are a **keystone species** in the Chesapeake Bay. Their reefs provide valuable habitat, food, and protection for other marine animals and plants.

“Oysters provide services that support the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and our region’s economy. Oyster Recovery Partnership has made it their mission to promote these important ecosystem services and TNC is proud to be a partner to advance this mission. Congratulations on 25 years improving the value of oysters.”

MARK BRYER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

Filter feeding increases water clarity, which **helps submerged aquatic vegetation** (SAV) receive the sunlight necessary to photosynthesize, grow, and propagate. SAVs provide habitat and security for all sorts of marine life.

Oysters are an important food source for marine life and people. Oyster harvesting, whether through traditional fishing methods or the growing aquaculture (oyster farming) industry, **provides jobs** for many people living in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and **supports hundreds of small businesses** in their communities.



OYSTERS ARE OUR WORLD | Over the last 25 years, ORP has planted 8.5 billion oysters in the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay to increase the population, improve water quality, and support the regional seafood economy.

RESTORATION

Maryland is midway through a strategy to restore and protect oysters in five Chesapeake Bay tributaries: Harris Creek, and the Little Choptank, the Tred Avon, the St. Mary's and the Manokin Rivers. Harris Creek, at 351 acres (roughly the size of the U.S. National Mall), is one of the largest man-made reef systems in the world. It has some of the highest densities of oysters found on Maryland reefs - and those oysters are capable of filtering its entire volume of water in less than 10 days during summer months.



PUBLIC FISHERY

Working closely with scientists from the Department of Natural Resources and contracting with commercial watermen, ORP began to help rebuild public fishery reefs in 2012. Since then - and on an annual basis - county waterways receive thousands of bushels of recycled shell and millions of juvenile oysters. Maryland's oyster harvest, once the envy of the world, remains an important part of the state's economy and dozens of waterfront communities.



AQUACULTURE

Oyster aquaculture (oyster farming) is Maryland's fastest growing seafood sector. ORP has supported aquaculture expansion through training opportunities, as well as access to low- and no-cost equipment and supplies to watermen throughout the state. Since 2011, 88 leaseholders have participated in our training program, producing more than 1.5 billion spat-on-shell that have been planted back on to leased bottom around the Bay.



SHELL RECYCLING

Oyster shell is the building block of an oyster reef - and it is in short supply. ORP's Shell Recycling Alliance® (SRA), launched in 2009, has collected 200,000+ bushels of shell at no cost on a weekly basis from 450 total participating restaurants and members in Maryland, Washington, DC, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The SRA now contributes one third of the shell ORP needs annually for restoration and supports the planting of 950 million oysters in Chesapeake Bay waterways. The SRA has also kept 6,650 tons of shell out of area landfills and saved local businesses approximately \$300,000 in waste collection fees!

ORP IN THE COMMUNITY

ORP participates in hundreds of community events every year, everything from local oyster festivals and community meetings to corporate events and the annual "National Oyster Day" in August. These face-to-face connections raise awareness about oysters' importance in the Bay - and often engage volunteers, giving them hands on experience!



MARYLANDERS GROW OYSTERS

Thousands of waterfront property owners and communities volunteer their time to participate in ORP's Marylanders Grow Oysters program by hanging cages of juvenile oysters from their docks and piers until the oysters are large enough to be planted on local sanctuary reefs. Over the program's 10-year lifespan, it has grown to 34 participating Chesapeake Bay tributaries and produced tens of millions of healthy oysters. In 2018, participants raised 4.5 million oysters at their docks.

"For the past 25 years the partnership between ORP and the UMCES, Horn Point Oyster Hatchery has made significant progress restoring Maryland's native oyster. Using science based techniques to guide restoration has resulted in billions of new oysters in Maryland tributaries. We want to congratulate ORP on 25 years of dedicated and successful restoration efforts." **MIKE ROMAN, DIRECTOR, HORN POINT LABORATORY**



MAP KEY

- Marylanders Grow Oysters Tributary
- Major Shell Recycling Alliance Restaurant Area
- Big 5 Restoration Tributary

OYSTERS ARE OUR FUTURE | After 25 years, much remains to be done. We're excited to continue our restoration, public fishery, and aquaculture work and look forward to an even brighter future.

“BUILD-A-REEF” CAMPAIGNS THROUGHOUT THE CHESAPEAKE

ORP is working with the Severn River Association and other community groups to identify opportunities for community funded reef building projects in local waterways. The 2018 Severn River pilot project planted 46 million oysters - and another 20 million are planned to be planted in 2020.



OYSTERS RECOGNIZED AS WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TOOLS

ORP is leading efforts to establish oysters as EPA-approved best management practices (BMPs) to help state and local governments meet their Clean Water Act goals. In 2016, the EPA approved oyster aquaculture as a BMP, opening the door for this new Maryland industry to participate in Chesapeake Bay water quality clean-up goals. ORP continues to lead an expert panel evaluating oyster restoration practices as BMPs. If approved, restoration BMPs would significantly expand the scope and benefit to state and local governments to meet their water quality clean-up goals.



SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

Working closely with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, ORP has developed the first statewide electronic commercial fisheries reporting and management system. It provides commercial watermen the ability to give real-time, daily harvest reports and manage their fishing activity in a one-stop-shop reporting system. In the coming years, the system will expand to support charter boat and shellfish reporting as well.



MAKE YOUR END-OF-YEAR SUPPORT '25 MORE GENEROUS'

In celebration of our 25th anniversary,
consider increasing your gift by \$25 or 25%.
Go to oysterrecovery.org/donate25 today!

HERE'S
HOW YOU
CAN HELP

ATTEND EVENTS!

Whether you want to eat, drink, and be merry or expand your oyster knowledge, we have fun partners whose events help us plant more oysters. See what's coming up at oysterrecovery.org/events.

EAT OYSTERS AND MAKE SURE THOSE SHELLS ARE RECYCLED

Visit shellrecycling.org to see the list of more than 350 participating Shell Recycling Alliance members in MD, DC, VA and PA.



WEAR YOUR PASSION FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY OYSTERS

Shop our collection of t-shirts, hats, and more! Grab gear for everyone on your holiday shopping list at oysterrecovery.org/shop.



WILLING TO GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY FOR YOUR WATERWAY?

Join the Marylanders Grow Oysters program to grow baby oysters from your dock. Visit mdgrowoysters.org to learn more.

Run a Build-a-Reef campaign in your community. Contact us at info@oysterrecovery.org to learn how!