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Responsibility

World's largest oyster reef restoration project shows 'significant progress'

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

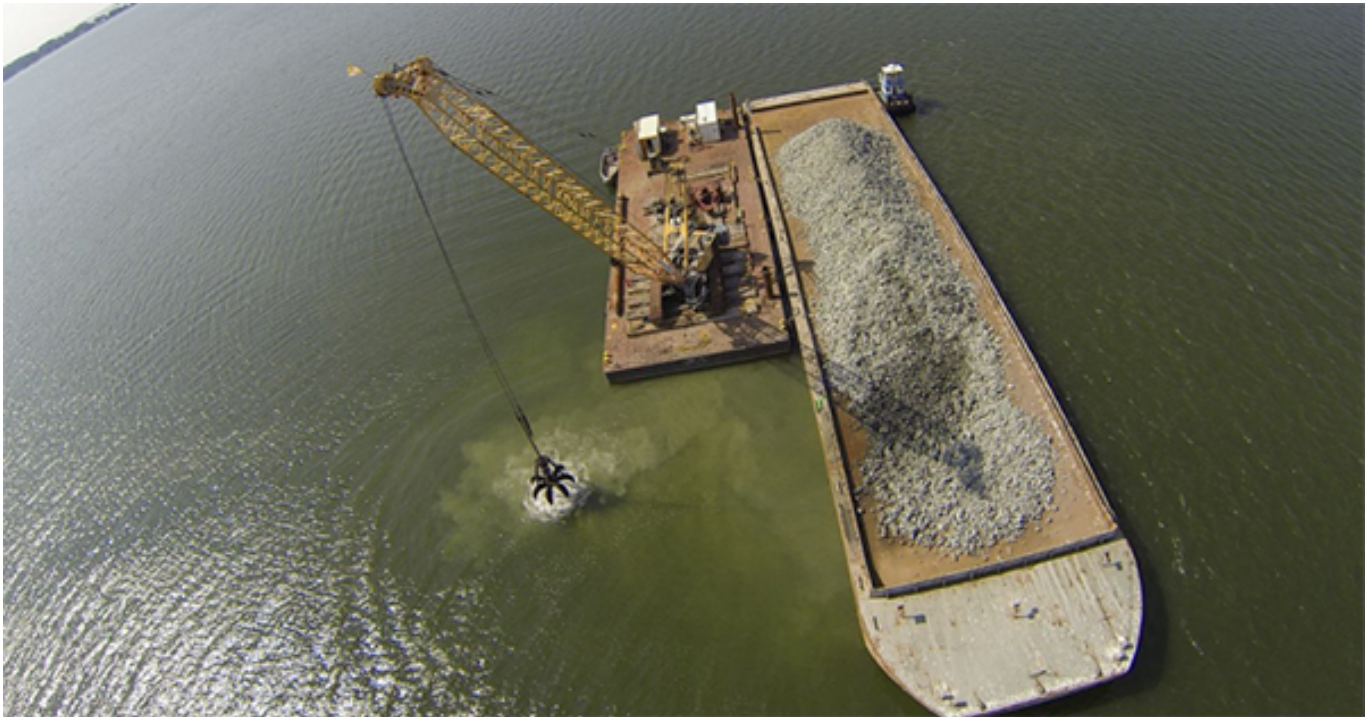
Oyster reef restoration project led by NOAA to revitalize more than 2,300 acres in Maryland and Virginia waters

Oyster reef restoration efforts in 10 Chesapeake Bay tributaries are making "significant progress toward regional goals (<https://d18lev1ok5leia.cloudfront.net/chesapeakebay/documents/2022-Chesapeake-Bay-Oyster-Restoration-Update.pdf>)," said National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

NOAA is leading teams in Maryland and Virginia waters to restore oyster reefs, which includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state agencies (including the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Virginia Marine Resources Commission) and various non-profit and academic partners.

The project, which involves restoring more than 2,300 acres, is the world's largest oyster reef restoration project. The team tallies their results at the end of each year, and to date, efforts have surpassed two square miles of healthy oyster reef habitat.

Oyster populations in the Chesapeake Bay are much lower than they used because of disease, overfishing, degraded water quality and other problems. Only about 3 percent of the historic native oyster population remains, which threatens the ecosystem and economic benefits that oyster reefs



Hard substrate is moved from a barge into the Piankatank River to form a reef onto which oysters can settle. Credit: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

provide.

A promotional banner for the Responsible Seafood Summit. On the left is a stylized eye logo. Next to it, the text reads "Responsible Seafood SUMMIT". To the right, it says "SAINT JOHN NEW BRUNSWICK CANADA" and "OCTOBER 2-5 2023". A prominent red button with the word "REGISTER" in white is positioned to the right of the text. The background features a world map with several red airplane icons flying across it. In the top right corner, there is a small logo for the "Global Seafood ALLIANCE".

<https://events.globalseafood.org/responsible-seafood-summit>

In response, the team selected 10 tributaries – five each in Maryland and Virginia. In each tributary, scientists first evaluate where restoration would work best, and then develop a restoration plan to guide the work, which can include building a reef base out of hard substrate and/or seeding an area with baby oysters. After the restoration work, the team monitors the oyster reef restoration areas to track their progress.



We built this city on oyster shells

When Seattle decided to rebuild the seawall separating its waterfront from Puget Sound, it turned to a bivalve byproduct for a unique, environmentally friendly material for an hospitable marine habitat. The city wanted its design and materials as pragmatic and beneficial for its underwater residents as for those using the parks, paths and services above ground.



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So far, seven of the 10 tributaries that were chosen for restoration work have been completed, with plans to finish restoring the 10 tributaries by 2025. Future restoration will likely seek to incorporate elements of restoration, aquaculture and the wild oyster fishery, NOAA reported.

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