



Recycled oyster shells

Don't Chuck Your Shucks

Project Status: Ongoing

Project Summary

Background

Natural oyster shell is the best material for settlement and growth of young oysters. Given the shortage of shells for use in restoring the Inland Bays' oyster population, the Center has formed partnerships with local businesses to divert oyster shells from landfills for use in shellfish enhancement projects.

Project Description

When you visit a participating restaurant and enjoy an oyster meal, the spent shells (shucks) from your plate will be separated from the waste stream and put into special bins. A Center employee picks up shells from the restaurants and transports them to a facility located near the Fresh Pond Tract of Delaware Seashore State Park. They are cured in the sun for six months to remove soft tissue and bacteria. The recycled shells are then used in local habitat restoration projects such as living shorelines, oyster reefs, and oyster gardening.

Objective

The DCYS Program teaches restaurant staff and patrons about the benefits of healthy oyster populations, as well as the Center's mission to improve the Bays. Restaurant staff have opportunities to volunteer in "bagging" events and preparing shells for use in restoration projects.

Project Timeline

The shells are collected year-round, more often during the warmer months of the year when visitors frequent our local participating restaurants. The Center hosts "bagging" events throughout the year as the material is needed to complete restoration projects. It's a great team-building event for organizations.



Volunteers bagging recycled oyster shells

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Partner Restaurants (2023)

- Above The Dunes
- Big Oyster Brewery
- Bluecoast (Bethany)
- Bluecoast (Rehoboth)
- Catch 54
- Chesapeake & Maine
- Claws Seafood House
- Cottage Cafe
- Drift
- Fins Ale House (Bethany)
- Fins Ale House (Rehoboth)
- Fins Ale House (Selbyville)
- Fins Fish House
- Henlopen City Oyster House
- Hooked Up
- JR's Seafood Shack
- Lewes Oyster House
- Lobster Shanty
- Matt's Fish Camp (Lewes)
- Matt's Fish Camp (Bethany)
- Matt's Fish Camp (Fenwick)
- Starboard RAW
- The Blue Crab
- The Clubhouse at Baywood
- Wheelhouse
- Zoggs



Recycled shells are bagged and used for restoration projects.

What you can do

- Enjoy oysters in our local participating restaurants.
- Volunteer to help the Center bag shells, build reefs, or join our outreach programs.
- For more information and to find restaurants visit, inlandbays.org/dont-chuck-your-shucks.

Funding Partners

The program is funded by a combination of private donations and grants from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. All fundraising activities are supported by private funds.



Outcomes/ Conclusions

As of 2023, more than 37,500 bushels of oyster shells have been collected by the DCYS program. That's over 1,000 tons of oyster shells diverted from landfills. These shells have been used to establish oyster reefs, supported restoration efforts like living shorelines, and have been shared with a fellow National Estuary Program, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary to be used in science and restoration projects.

Project Highlights

In 2023 the Center collected roughly 7,000 bushels of oyster shells from participating Don't Chuck Your Shucks restaurants!



DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE
INLAND BAYS
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The Delaware Center for the Inland Bays is a non-profit organization established in 1994 to promote the wise use and enhancement of the Inland Bays and its watershed. With its many partners, the Center conducts public outreach and education, develops and implements restoration projects, encourages scientific inquiry and sponsors research. To learn how you can get on board with the bays go to inlandbays.org.