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## Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Project

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary is a member of the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Task Force, a coalition of organizations working to revitalize the fledgling oyster population of Delaware Bay. Other key members of the restoration group include: the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, Rutgers University's Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, Delaware River Basin Commission, Delaware State University's College of Agriculture and Related Sciences, the Delaware River and Bay Authority, Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corporation, Delaware Bay Section of the Shell Fisheries Council, Delaware Shellfish Advisory Council, and Commercial Township, New Jersey.

During the summer of 2005, the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Task Force initiated a large-scale oyster shell-planting and transplant program that, by 2011, had deposited almost 2.4 million bushels of shell onto existing oyster reefs. These "seed beds" are needed because oyster larvae require a clean, hard surface upon which they can attach, or "recruit." This effort has yielded a substantial increase in survival among juveniles; this, despite a population decline in areas outside the seed beds.

The success of this project has earned it a **2008 Coastal America Partnership Award**, a 2009 gold medal from the Federal Executive Board, and a **2008 Government Award** from the Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin (PDF files).

Please watch the video below for more information on shell-planting efforts for Delaware Bay oyster restoration.



The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary worked with other members of the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Task Force to raise \$200,000 for shell planting in 2011. For further details, please read our [press release](#) entitled "Group Overcomes Odds to Replenish Oyster Reefs" (PDF file).

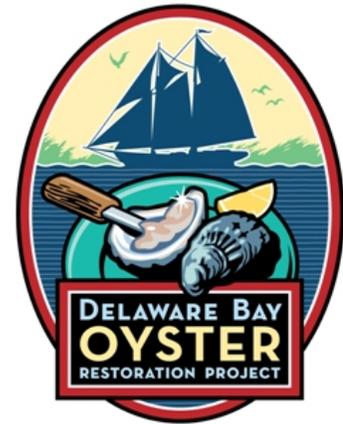
### Why Oysters?

For centuries, oysters have provided a sustainable food supply and contributed to the economies of Delaware and New Jersey communities. In fact, 1 to 2 million bushels were harvested every year during the 1930s, when the population initially began to decline. The introduction of the oyster disease MSX in the 1950s, followed in the 1990s by a second disease, Dermo, has resulted in a significant decline in the oyster population. Consequently, the industry has been imperiled.

The oyster population rebounded somewhat by 2000 due to the combined efforts of both states and the oyster industry, producing some 100,000 bushels per year. Today, however, the oyster population is feeling the effects of below-average biological recruitment for unknown reasons.

Over time, the shell-planting and transplant program could increase

[Click here to see our marketing efforts](#)  
[Click here to find oysters near you](#)



[Click here to see photos of our Coastal America Partnership Award Ceremony](#)

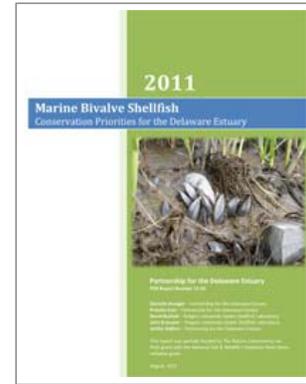
Oyster Stats	
Year	Shell Planted
2005	280,000 bushels
2006	505,500 bushels
2007	681,500 bushels
2008	427,000 bushels
2009	237,000 bushels
2010	93,500 bushels (NJ only)
2011	159,000 bushels

Once baby oysters, or "larvae," have attached to clean shell, they can then be transplanted farther north in Delaware Bay. There they stand a better chance of reaching market size thanks to fewer predators. These activities are subsidized, in part, by landing taxes paid by harvesters in both states.

### PDE's Newest: 2011 Shellfish Priorities Report

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production to approximately 200,000 to 400,000 bushels per year, with a possible economic impact of up to \$60 million between the two states. This is money that would not only revitalize the oyster population in the future, but also many coastal communities dependent upon the living resource.



For more information on the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Project, please read our [brochure](#) (PDF file), [2008 update](#) (PDF file), and past [press releases](#). You can also contact Dr. Eric Powell of Rutgers University's Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory at (856) 785-0074, extension 4300. For more insight into the history of Delaware Bay oysters, please read the PDE's [spring 2005 issue](#) of *Estuary News*, as well as our [oyster fact sheet](#) (PDF file). And for additional insight into the Delaware Estuary's other living resources, please click [here](#).