

PRESS RELEASE



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Attachments: Four Photos Oyster Reef Building on Moores Beach

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RESTORATION WORK CONTINUES ALONG NEW JERSEY'S DELAWARE BAYSHORE, NEW OYSTER REEF BUILT AT MOORES BEACH

Second Annual "Shell-a-Bration" brings volunteers to strengthen coast's resiliency and habitat

Maurice River Township, New Jersey – Conservation organizations leading the efforts to restore New Jersey's Delaware Bay beaches today organized the Second Annual "Shell-a-Bration" oyster reef building volunteer event.

Dedicated volunteers braved the elements and worked alongside American Littoral Society and Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey to establish a near-shore whelk shell bar at Moores Beach in Maurice River Township along New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore. The shell bar was built to prevent sand loss from wind-driven waves. An approximately 200-foot oyster reef was constructed offshore to test whether the reef bars help reduce beach erosion and create calmer water for spawning horseshoe crabs.

"The Second Annual Shell-a-Bration truly celebrates the ecology, community, and culture of the Delaware Bayshore," stated **Captain Al Modjeski, Habitat Restoration Program Director, American Littoral Society**. "It reinforces the connectivity between the natural and human-built bayshore communities through reef building and celebrates the significance of the Bay's resources through restoration."

"There are many strategies to defend our Delaware Bayshore, but one of the best and most productive are these oyster reefs," stated **Dr. Larry Niles, a biologist with American Littoral Society and Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey**. "They not only replicate a lost but important habitat on Delaware Bay — reefs once covered much of the bayshore — but they provide just enough protection to make a difference in how long our beaches persist against the unrelenting forces of nature. In a way, we are

fighting nature with nature."

Shorebirds, like the federally listed Red Knot, depend on an uninterrupted supply of horseshoe crab eggs when they stopover in Delaware Bay during their migration. In recent years, countless horseshoe crab eggs have been lost because of the devastating storms that swept away the beaches they depend on.

The new oyster reef will attenuate waves but still allow for horseshoe crab breeding. In existing areas where crabs can breed without interruption, like creek mouths protected by sand shoals or rock jetties, egg densities can exceed ten times the egg densities on unprotected beaches.

"New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore hosts an annual wildlife spectacle of global significance - the time-honored migration of Red Knots to reach the eggs of these ancient horseshoe crabs," said **David Wheeler, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey Executive Director**. "Red Knots fly to New Jersey's Delaware Bay from as far away as Tierra del Fuego in South America to feed on horseshoe crab eggs. Volunteer projects like the Shell-a-bration help connect the people of New Jersey with these endangered shorebirds and the largest population of horseshoe crabs in the world."

Last year, over 130 volunteers and veterans built the South Reeds Beach oyster reef at the First Annual Shell-a-Bration. Veterans Day on the Bay 2015 dedicated the South Reeds Beach oyster reef to all veterans and highlighted veteran involvement in the effort to restore New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore. Event attendees honored their own military veterans by inscribing that special person's name on a shell and placing that shell on "Veterans Reef." Guests also helped study the wildlife living in this new reef with hands-on, interactive marine science activities like seining, trapping, trawling, and species identification.

Veterans Reef and the Moores Beach Oyster Reef are two of the many projects that American Littoral Society and Conserve Wildlife Foundation are working on to restore the ecology and economy of the Delaware Bayshore.

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, American Littoral Society and Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and the New Jersey Recovery Fund to remove 8,000 tons of debris and added 45,000 tons of sand to the beaches just before the annual spring arrival of the red knot in 2013.

Additional work after 2012 restored another mile of shoreline, including two new beaches of poor quality even before Sandy. To date, the groups have placed 85,000 cubic yards of sand and restored seven beaches along New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore. In early 2016, groups began another phase of restoration work at Cook's Beach and Kimble's Beach in anticipation of the return of the horseshoe crabs and red knots in May.

The projects are being funded by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) through their Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Grants Program, and are being developed in partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife.

To learn more about the restoration work taking place in Delaware Bay, visit www.RestoreNJBayshore.org. More event photos available upon request.

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The American Littoral Society is a member-supported, coastal conservation non-profit that promotes the study and conservation of marine life and habitat, protects the coast from harm and engages communities to do the same through work in education, advocacy, and conservation. Founded in 1961, on Sandy Hook, New Jersey, the American Littoral Society now has regional offices in throughout New Jersey, New York and Florida. For more information, visit www.LittoralSociety.org.

The Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWF) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife and the habitats they depend on. CWF utilizes science, research, wildlife management, habitat restoration, education and volunteer stewardship to help conserve and protect a variety of at-risk species of wildlife in New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the nation. For more information, visit www.ConserveWildlifeNJ.org.

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