

PRESS RELEASE

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Oysters Return to Breton Bay Thanks to Community Investments

The second annual "One Million Oysters for Breton Bay" event was held on Saturday, September 30th. Forty volunteers came out to plant one million baby oysters, known as "spat", at Lover's Point in the upper portion of Breton Bay.

"Breton Bay was once a productive area for oystering," said Bob Lewis, former executive director of the St. Mary's River Watershed Association.

"Captains' logs from the turn of the century more than a hundred years ago note that as they steered north into Breton Bay after dark, lights were seen everywhere. One captain noted that he didn't realize how many homes were in Leonardtown, only to find out that the lights were 'nearly a hundred' anchored skipjacks, bugeyes, and sloops awaiting dawn to harvest oysters on opening day."

By the end of the twentieth century, oysters disappeared from Breton Bay. Annual surveys by the Maryland DNR over the past two decades indicate that oysters no longer live and reproduce in the central and upper Breton Bay. Degraded water quality and disease are likely the leading causes for the decline.



In 2017, things began to change. The Friends of St. Clement's Bay launched the Lover's Point oyster restoration project in an area designated as a shellfish sanctuary. Teaming up with others including the St. Mary's River Watershed Association and the Southern Maryland Recreational Fishing Organization, the Friends have planted more than three million oysters at Lover's Point, a site designated for restoration as part of the Marylanders Grow Oysters program.

"Our project is more than an acre in size now and about half that area is a thriving, rich oyster bar," said Liz Curtz, president of the Friends. "For the first time in decades, our oysters successfully spawned this summer, and baby oysters were found on our restoration site. It's a dream come true."

Shore Thing Shellfish LLC, Bell Marine Services, and Last Look Outfitters joined in on Saturday along with more than three dozen community volunteers.

“The successful oyster spawn and settlement of spat at Lover’s Point is the best birthday present I could ask for,” said Emma Green whose birthday was Sunday. On Tuesday, Green was promoted to executive director of the St. Mary’s River Association.

“We are hopeful that the spat we planted on Saturday will grow, reproduce, and continue to establish a self-sustaining reef,” said Green. “These amazing bivalves are the kidneys of our Chesapeake Bay. They filter water and provide valuable habitat for all kinds of marine life.”



To find out more about the project and learn how you can get involved, contact Liz Curtz) - curtzeli@gmail.com, or Emma Green - emmaSMRWA@gmail.com.