

DELAWARE BAY OYSTER RESTORATION TASK FORCE

Cumberland County Empowerment Zone
Delaware & New Jersey Shellfish Industry
Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

Delaware River and Bay Authority
Delaware River Basin Commission

Delaware State University College of Agriculture and Related Sciences

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
Rutgers University's Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Philadelphia District

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS:

DELAWARE:

Senator Joe Biden
Senator Tom Carper
Congressman Mike Castle
Governor Ruth Ann Minner

NEW JERSEY:

Senator Frank Lautenberg
Senator Robert Menendez
Congressman Frank LoBiondo
Governor Jon Corzine

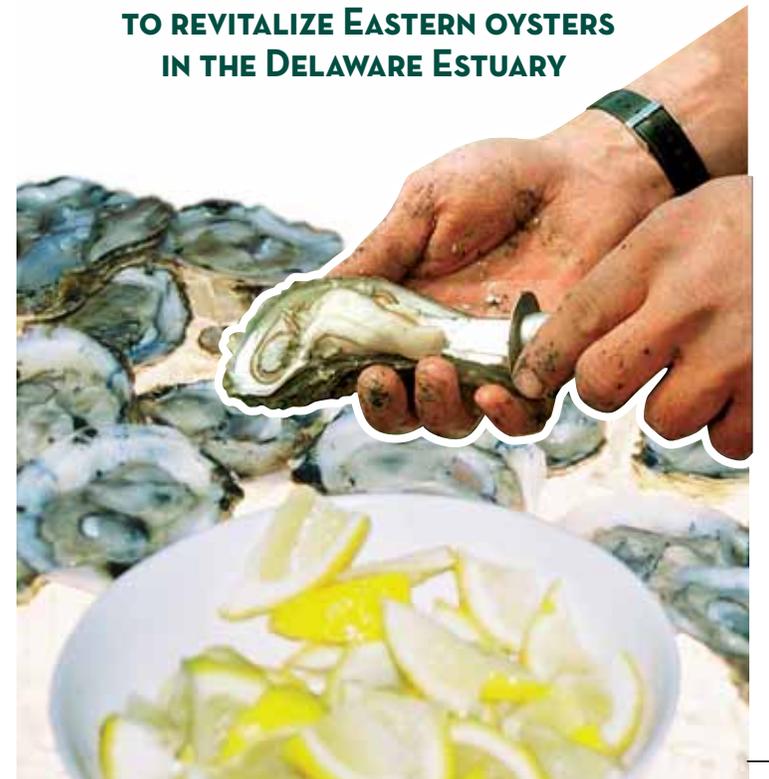
Garlic Pepper Hot Sauce created to help promote the Delaware Bay oyster.



OYSTER STATS:

- Amount of shell planted in 2005 – 280,000 bushels
- Amount of shell planted in 2006 – 505,500 bushels
- Amount of shell planted in 2007 – 681,500 bushels
- Projected harvest goal by 2009 – 150,000 or more bushels

A COOPERATIVE INITIATIVE TO REVITALIZE EASTERN OYSTERS IN THE DELAWARE ESTUARY





DELAWARE BAY OYSTER RESTORATION PROJECT

The Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Project is a cooperative initiative currently underway that is revitalizing Eastern oysters, a signature species of the Delaware Estuary. This work is being carried out by the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Task Force: a collaborative group of organizations, institutions, and agencies working at the local, state, regional, and federal levels. Together, our goal is nothing less than the sustained revitalization of Delaware Bay oysters and the industry that once thrived upon them.

In the past, Delaware Bay oysters have been impacted by climate change, habitat loss, fishing, and other natural factors. Their numbers have also declined as a result of the oyster disease MSX in the 1950s, followed in the 1990s by a second disease, Dermo. Despite these and other setbacks, researchers remain optimistic that the species is on the road to recovery.

Today, the Delaware Bay oyster's population is rebounding despite many years of below-average biological recruitment (i.e., the number of young oysters entering the population each year). This turnaround is taking place on oyster beds managed by the States of Delaware and New Jersey. These existing or historic beds are being planted with clean ocean sea clam and oyster shell that is strategically placed in the Delaware Bay. These shell-planting sites provide surfaces to which oyster larvae can attach in order to grow. Once the larvae are recruited, or attached, they will remain on these beds.

The restoration project also includes transplanting oysters from lower in the Bay, where the salinity is higher, to areas further north in the Bay, where they stand a better chance of surviving. These restoration efforts would not have been possible without the support of Congressional appropriations in 2004, 2005 and 2006 totaling \$4.3 million.

During three years of implementation, the Delaware Bay Oyster Restoration Project has doubled oyster recruitment in targeted areas of the Bay. If this same progress can be maintained over time, the result will be an economic boost to the many bayshore communities that have staked their livelihood on the shellfish industry for more than a century. To them, healthy oysters represent their past, present and future.

Beyond the economic benefits, Delaware Bay oysters also play an important role in improving water quality and ecological integrity. Each adult oyster is capable of filtering 50 gallons of water per day as it feeds on microscopic organisms. The oysters' shells also form reef habitats that attract and support a variety of other creatures. These creatures, along with oysters, are a source of food for many species, including humans. Eastern oysters from the Delaware Bay are particularly prized for their fine flavor and plump, firm meat.

To learn more about Delaware Bay oysters and the Restoration Project visit: www.DelawareEstuary.org

