CRCL’s first reef brings new life to Biloxi Marsh

In November of 2014, with your help, CRCL constructed its first recycled oyster shell reef in Biloxi marsh, a half-mile breakwater that utilized 848 tons of shell recycled from your restaurants. To assess the Biloxi Marsh reef’s impacts on erosion, as well as its role in providing habitat for juvenile oysters, we are conducting both biannual and monthly monitoring. Using both a high-accuracy GPS unit and timelapse photography, we’re tracking changes in the shoreline behind the reef as it compares to the surrounding, unprotected marsh.

On-reef monitoring is usually reserved for the low-water winter months, but a fortuitous wind and tide gave us a sneak peek at the reef itself – and we’re very happy to report that we’ve found new oyster growth! Baby oysters begin their lives as tiny, free swimming organisms called veligers; when then encounter something hard on which to settle, they attach and become spat. Spat grow very quickly in our warm gulf waters, reaching adulthood within the first few years of settlement. The spat we found are only 9 months old, and already nearly an inch long! With the recruitment of new oysters, our reef has become a true living shoreline – a vital habitat that can provide a suite of valuable ecosystem services, including serving as habitat for a variety of invertebrate and fish species, forage for birds, and filtering the water. The living reef also has the ability to keep pace with sea-level rise – a sustainable solution to the land loss threatening the area. We’ll conduct a full assessment of the growth on the Biloxi reef this winter – stay tuned for more details!
CRCL’s next reef to protect ½ mile of shoreline in Barataria Bay

With our first reef successfully installed, we’ve been hard at work planning our next living shoreline project! Our second reef is proposed for construction in the Barataria Basin, in an area known as Hackberry Bay. The proposed reef site falls along a natural land bridge, which separates the Louisiana state oyster seed reservation to the North from the more heavily predated region of Creole Bay to the south. Over time, erosion has severely degraded this land bridge, jeopardizing the health of the oyster seed grounds and the fisheries and industries that depend on them.

Our proposed reef, constructed using a gabion design filled with 800 tons of recycled shell, is designed to serve as a natural shoreline protection for a half mile of this integral land bridge, fortifying up to 12 acres of marsh habitat and establishing 2 acres of reef, essential habitat for red drum, reef fish, and a variety of invertebrates. We’re very excited to say that the new reef is now funded by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation! Construction of the Barataria Bay reef is scheduled to begin in 2019 – more details to come!

New, reduced pricing begins September 1st, 2017

We’re continuing our efforts to develop the Oyster Shell Recycling Program into a sustainable, long-term way to keep Louisiana oyster shell out of the waste stream. This May, we released a public request for proposals for the recycling aspect of the program, to help us ensure that we’re providing the best quality recycling service for the best possible price for our partners. We’re happy to report that we’ve renewed our contract with Phoenix recycling, with a negotiated lower per-bin cost from the previous year, a tiered discount system, and more options to your pick-up schedule.

Overall, our partners are now participating at a 50% discount from the program cost, and have the option of up to a 40% discount from the previous year. We will continue to work on program updates that allow our partners to divert as much shell as possible away from landfills and into projects to restore our coast. Responses regarding pickup schedule and requested number of bins are due at the end of August. Help us help the coast by leveraging these discounts to maximize your shell recycling!
And remember:
Once you shuck 'em, don't just chuck 'em!

Support for the Oyster Shell Recycling Program Provided By:

Thank You
for your support!

Please let us know if we can help you educate your staff about this important project.