



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA Celebrates Earth Week at Recovery Act Project to Restore Oyster Reefs off North Carolina

NOAA joined local and state partners in Hatteras, N.C., today to celebrate Earth Week at an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project that is putting local residents to work rebuilding 50 acres of oyster reefs in the Pamlico Sound and around coastal North Carolina.

"The Recovery Act is making a difference here in North Carolina," said John Gray, director of NOAA's Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs. "Restoring oyster habitat is an investment that pays off immediately by supporting blue and green jobs. Over the long term, recovering oysters will help improve water quality and will boost important recreational and commercial fisheries that bring economic vitality to coastal communities."

The \$5 million Recovery Act project is employing truckers, quarry workers, barge operators, and tugboat captains to help create new oyster reefs in Pamlico Sound. Out-of-work fishermen are using their boats to place 41,000 bushels of oyster shells in the waters of Hyde, Carteret, Pender, and New Hanover counties. The limestone used to construct reef in Pamlico Sound and oyster shells provide a hard surface on which baby oysters can grow. Each mature oyster can filter pollutants from up to 50 gallons of water per day.

"Last year I had to lay off a number of people from my company," said Simon Rich, general manager of Stevens Towing Company, a contractor on the project. "When this project came through, I hired many of them back, and my three crews are now working 24 hours a day on the project."

"The Recovery Act funding has helped move North Carolina's oyster restoration efforts ahead of its current schedule by six years," said Todd Miller, executive director of the North Carolina Coastal Federation. "This project grows from a long-standing partnership among NOAA, the federation, the Division of Marine Fisheries, North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina Wilmington and North Carolina Sea Grant."

Through the Recovery Act, NOAA was provided \$167 million for marine and coastal habitat restoration. The North Carolina Estuary Habitat Restoration is one of 50 habitat restoration projects selected by NOAA for this funding.

More than 30 projects have broken ground, with the rest preparing to start throughout the next year and a half. The 50 projects are supporting thousands of short-term and long-term jobs. They support the equivalent of 250 full-time jobs and are expected to support another 1,000 jobs before they are completed.

When all the planned projects are complete, 8,900 acres of habitat will be restored, and fish will gain access to 700 stream miles that had been blocked by obsolete and unsafe dams. The projects also will remove more than 850 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear and other marine trash, rebuild oyster and other shellfish habitat, and reduce threats to 11,750 acres of coral reef habitat.

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On the Web:

NOAA Recovery Act: <http://www.noaa.gov/recovery>

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