



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure



Contacts:

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Elizabeth River Project 757-399-7487 c 757-477-2304
Christy Everett, Chesapeake Bay Foundation 757-644-4112 c 757-679-3566

Lafayette to Reach Fully Restored for Oysters

Fast Facts – Historic Rebound of the Lafayette

The Elizabeth River Project and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) began organizing the community to restore the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth River in 2009. A Small Watershed Grant, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), in cooperation with the US EPA and the federal Chesapeake Bay Program, provided the catalyst federal funding that allowed the non-profits to launch a community-wide plan for the Lafayette in 2011 with roles for all.

In turn, concerted efforts by many partners led to the removal of the Lafayette in 2016 from the state list of waters impaired for bacteria. Today we celebrate funding awarded by NFWF to construct the last acres needed to achieve another historic milestone for the Chesapeake Bay. **With the last five acres now funded, the Lafayette is slated within the next year to become the first Virginia river to meet goals set by bay scientists for restoration of the native oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) population.**

- **The Elizabeth River Project will continue its lead role with construction of oyster reefs** in the Lafayette, building its 12th oyster reef in this branch of the Elizabeth in the next year. The additional five acres will bring the **Lafayette 100% to goal for the 80 acres of functioning oyster reef** prescribed for it by a workgroup of bay scientists. Elizabeth River Project also will continue its efforts to work with homeowners and the **City of Norfolk** to construct “living shorelines,” natural shores that often include oyster habitat, throughout the Lafayette.
- **The Chesapeake Bay Foundation will continue its massive efforts to add live oysters and oyster habitat to the Lafayette.** CBF has seeded Lafayette oyster reefs with **40 million spat** already and has placed **875 oyster reef balls** on Lafayette oyster reefs since 2010. **Hundreds of citizen oyster gardeners** and **80 citizen spat catchers** have helped restore the oysters in the river over the years. With the help from the City of Norfolk, CBF has **collected hundreds of bushels of recycled oyster shells** from local restaurants to serve as a base for baby oysters. CBF placed over 500 **reef balls** on the newest oyster reefs this summer.
- **A total of 27 acres of reefs have so far been restored in the Lafayette**, with additional partners; including early leadership by the **VA Marine Resources Commission**, one of the first entities to construct oyster reefs in the river, and further efforts by the **US Army Corps of Engineers** and the City of Norfolk. The City is now completing a 1.4-acre oyster reef in the Lafayette in 2017 with NFWF Coastal Resiliency Funds. **The Rotary Club of Norfolk** funded the first oyster two reefs in the Lafayette, holding an Oyster Fund Benefit Oct. 24, 1998 at the Norfolk Yacht & Country Club and additional events. District-wide Rotary clubs are helping fund the final push.
- Through a collaborative effort, CBF, US Army Corps, **the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Christopher Newport University**, and **NOAA** discovered **48 acres of existing “relict” reefs** in 2014. These reefs have some of the largest oysters seen anywhere in the bay.

- **Lafayette Wetlands Partnership**, a non-profit, invented a small-scale oyster block, nicknamed the “oyster berg,” to facilitate residential scale oyster reefs. **SKW** and **HRSD** helped with molds and concrete.
- Combined partner efforts appear to be **tipping the scale to allow oyster populations to recover** in the Lafayette to a degree that’s rare around the bay. Example: Spat-on-shell success at the reef restored at the Granby Street bridge shows 118 oysters per square meter, two times the Bay Program goal of 50 oysters per meter. While Virginia Department of Health standards currently prohibit consumption of the Lafayette oyster, this restriction is being evaluated and we are hopeful that someday this will change.
- Oyster restoration has **many benefits**: creating habitat and feeding grounds for other species from fish to river otters to wading birds, improving water quality (oysters serve as natural filters), and protecting shorelines from erosion.
- Trawl surveys along restored reefs in the Lafayette have documented **25 species of fish**, including striped bass, red drum, summer flounder, silver perch and blue crabs.

Special thanks to our LAFAYETTE RIVER RESTORATION PARTNERS

Branscome	The Ohrstrom Foundation
Chesapeake Bay Foundation	The Orvis Company, Inc.
Christopher Newport University	Oyster Gardeners
City of Norfolk	Oyster Shell Recyclers
Devils Backbone Brewing Company	Port of Virginia
Elizabeth River Project donors	Quality Crab and Seafood
Environmental Protection Agency	Restore America’s Estuaries
Hampton Roads Sanitation District	River Star Homes, Schools & Businesses
The Hermitage Museum & Gardens	Rotary Club of Norfolk
Hodges and Hodges	SKW Constructors
Lafayette Wetlands Partnership	Spat Catchers
Luck Companies Foundation	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation	Virginia Institute of Marine Science
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration	Virginia Marine Resources Commission
Naval Support Activity	Virginia Zoo
Norfolk Yacht and Country Club	