



New Jersey Oyster Resource Management Overview

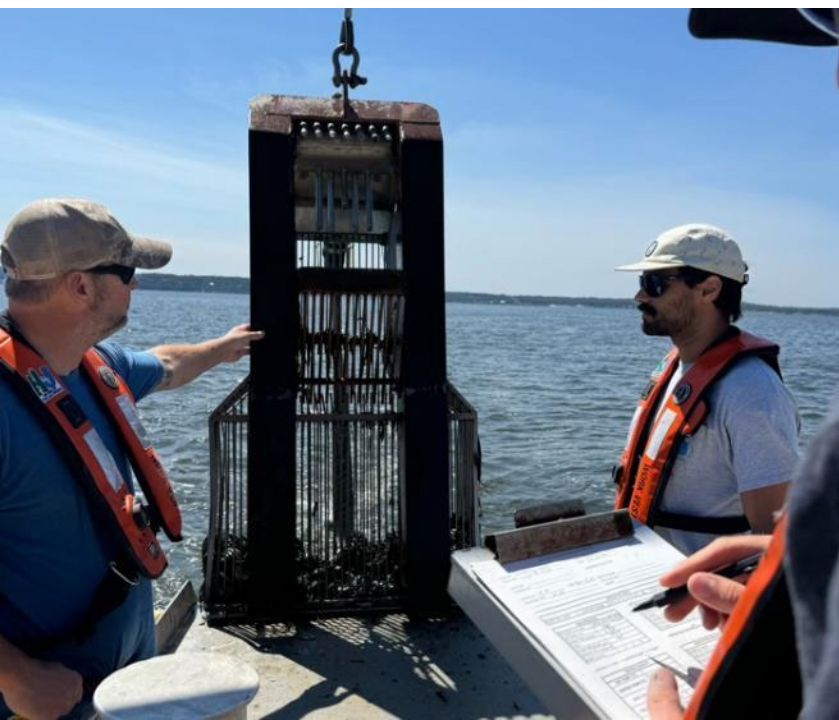
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2026 New Jersey Coastal and Climate Resilience Conference
March 9 - 11 | Galloway

Russ Babb, Chief
NJDEP Fish & Wildlife
Marine Resources
Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries





Why Oyster Reefs???

Ecosystem Function

- ❑ Oysters are a keystone species
- ❑ Reefs play a critical ecological role
 - ❖ Filtering and improving water quality, nutrient cycling, complex habitat for diverse marine species - many species that we actively manage.
- ❑ Commercial Fisheries



New Jersey Oyster Reef Systems



Delaware Bay Reefs

Cumberland and Salem Co.



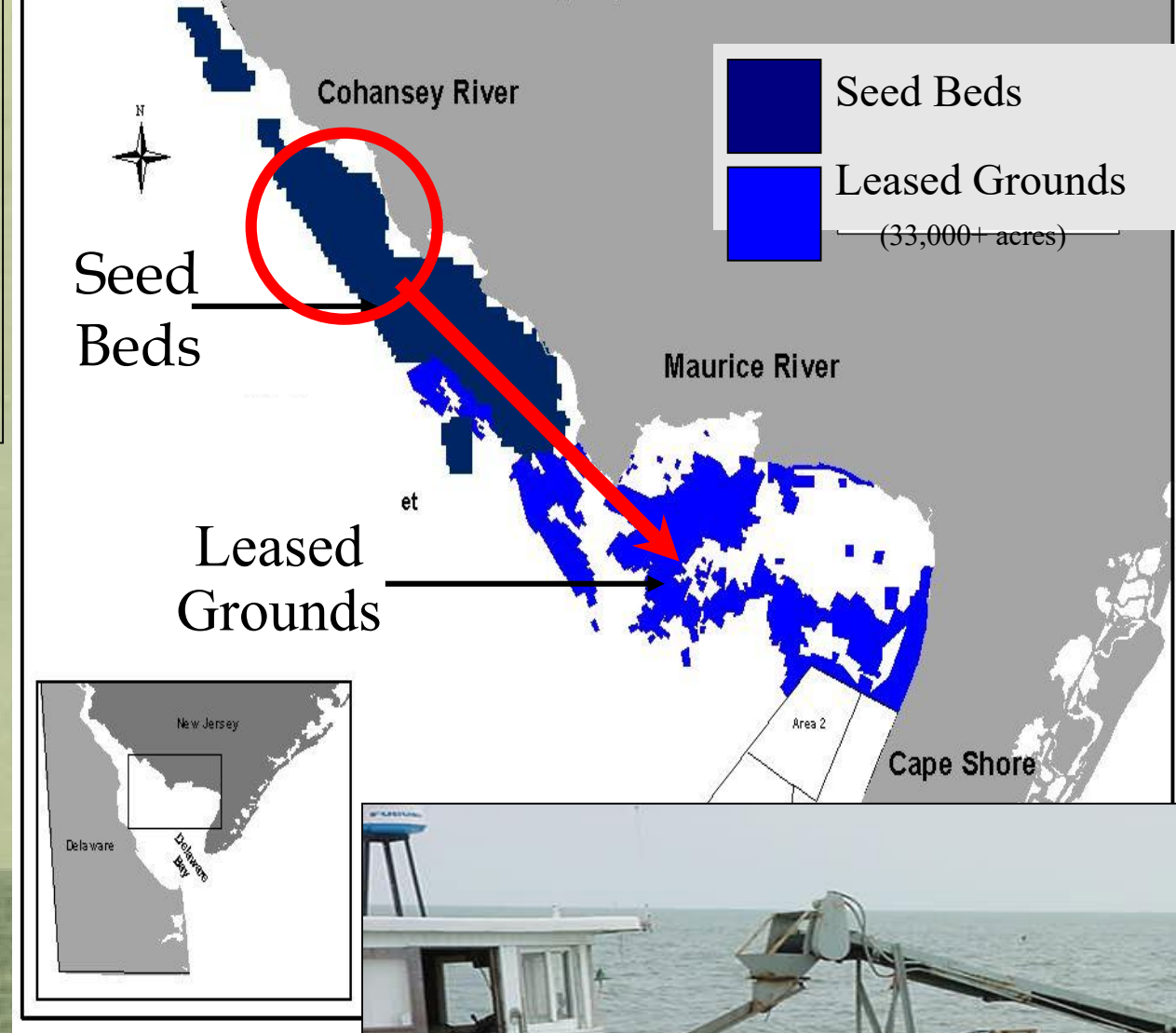
Mullica River Reefs

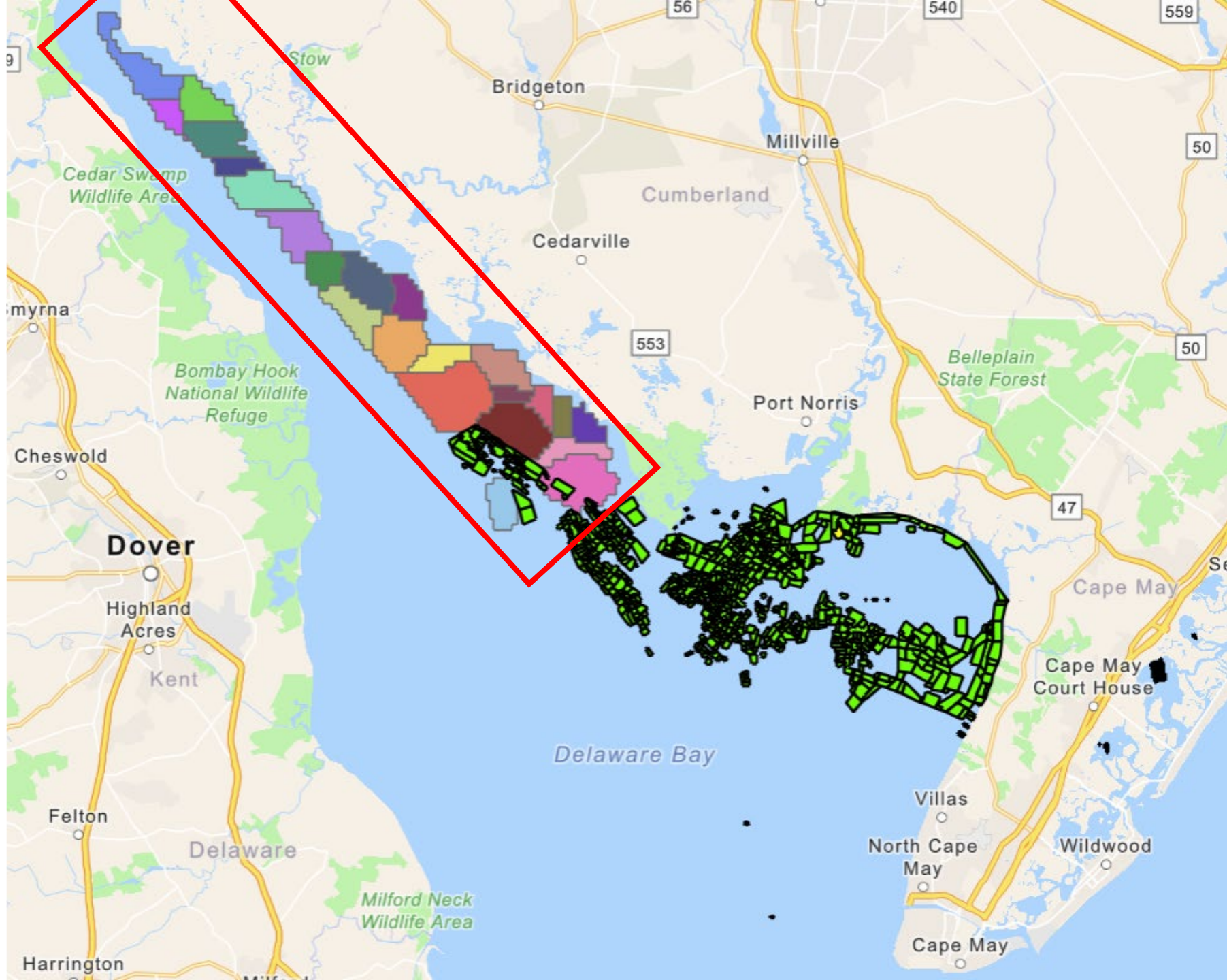
Atlantic and Ocean Co.

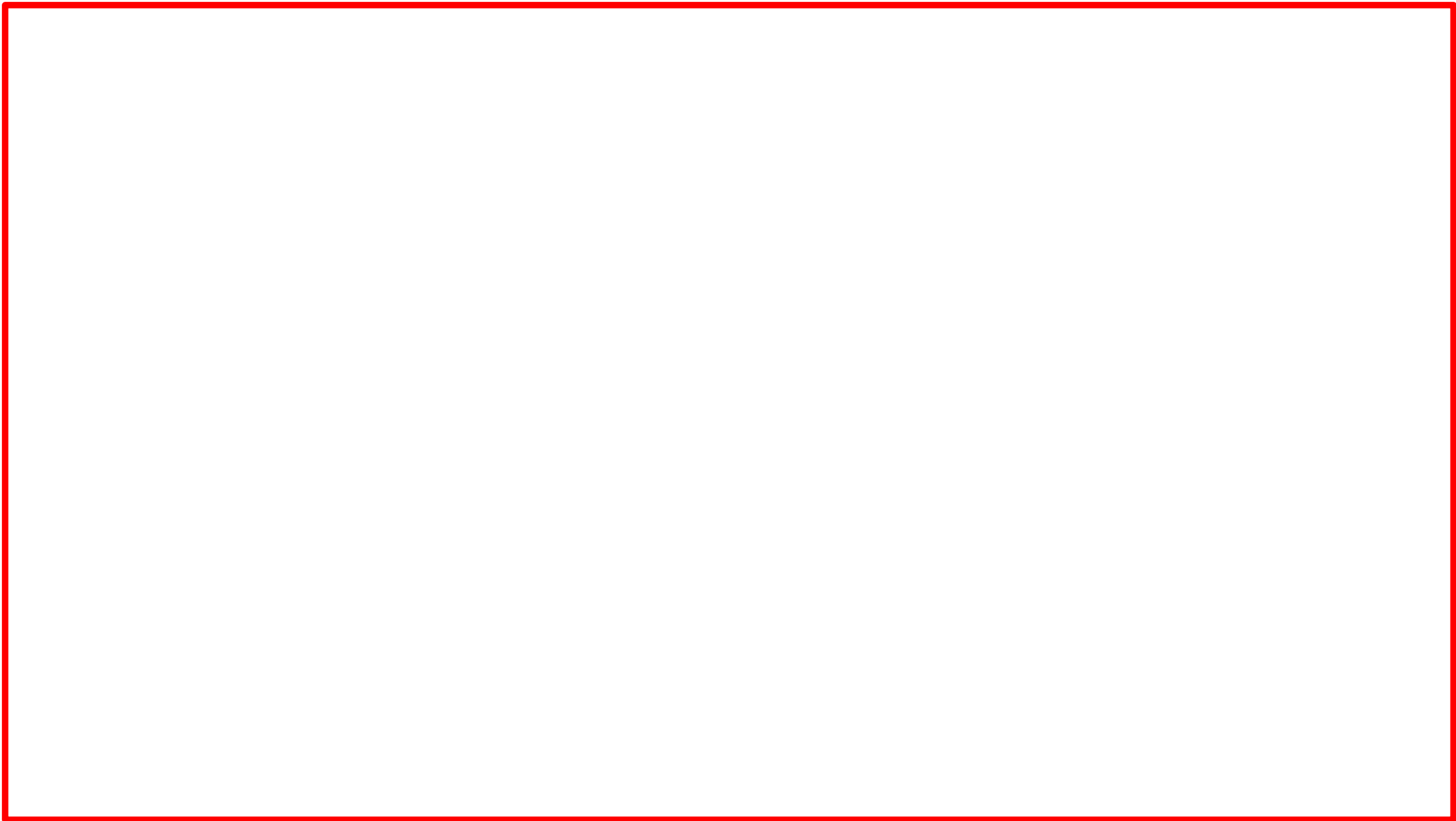




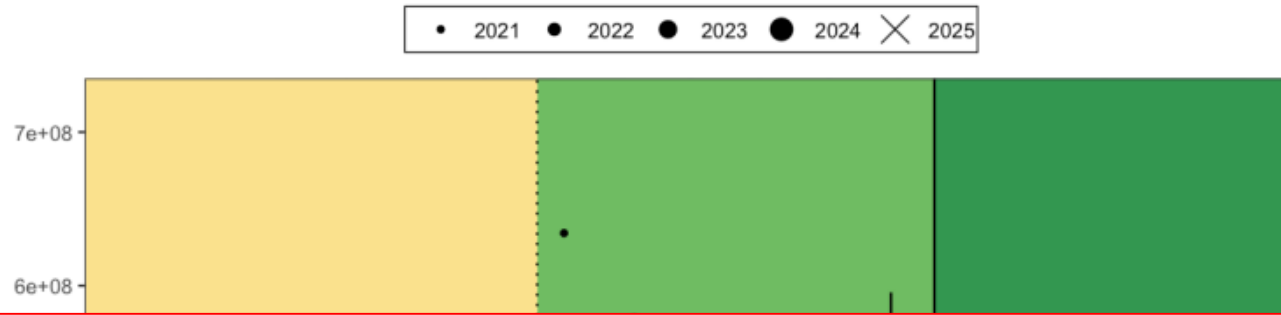
Bivalve, NJ -
1928





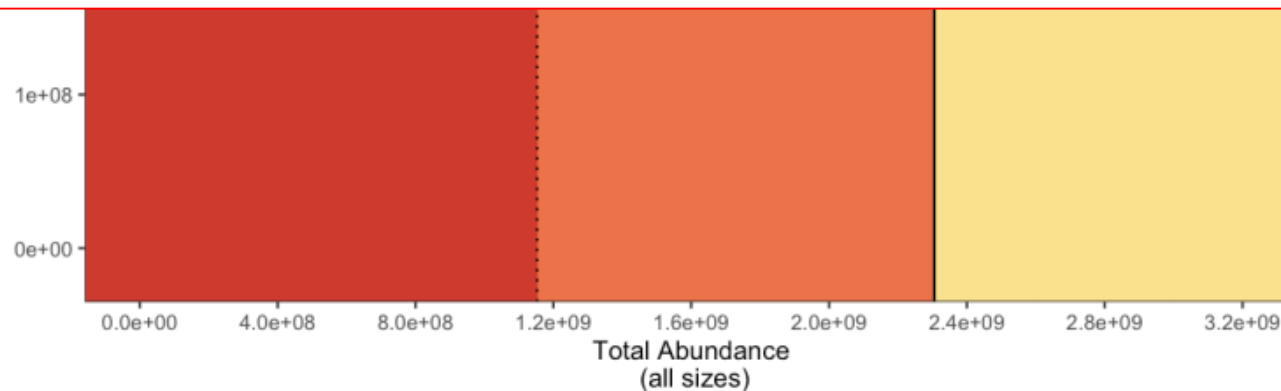






Since 2017, the review committee has affirmed that -

The New Jersey Delaware Bay oyster fishery is likely to remain **sustainable** under current fishery management strategies and prescribed exploitation rates.



Bivalve Packing, Co.

BOX 336

PORT NORRIS, NJ 08349

N.J. #1-SS
CERT. NO.

1-800-524-2833

ORIGINAL SHIPPER'S CERT. No. IF OTHER THAN ABOVE: NJ #1 SS

HARVEST DATE: 11/13/2025 SHIPPING DATE: 11/14/2025

HARVEST LOCATION: SHELLROCK-DELAWARE BAY NJWILD HARVEST

TYPE OF SHELLFISH: 100 CT BOX OF OYSTERS

QUANTITY OF SHELLFISH:

PRODUCT OF USA

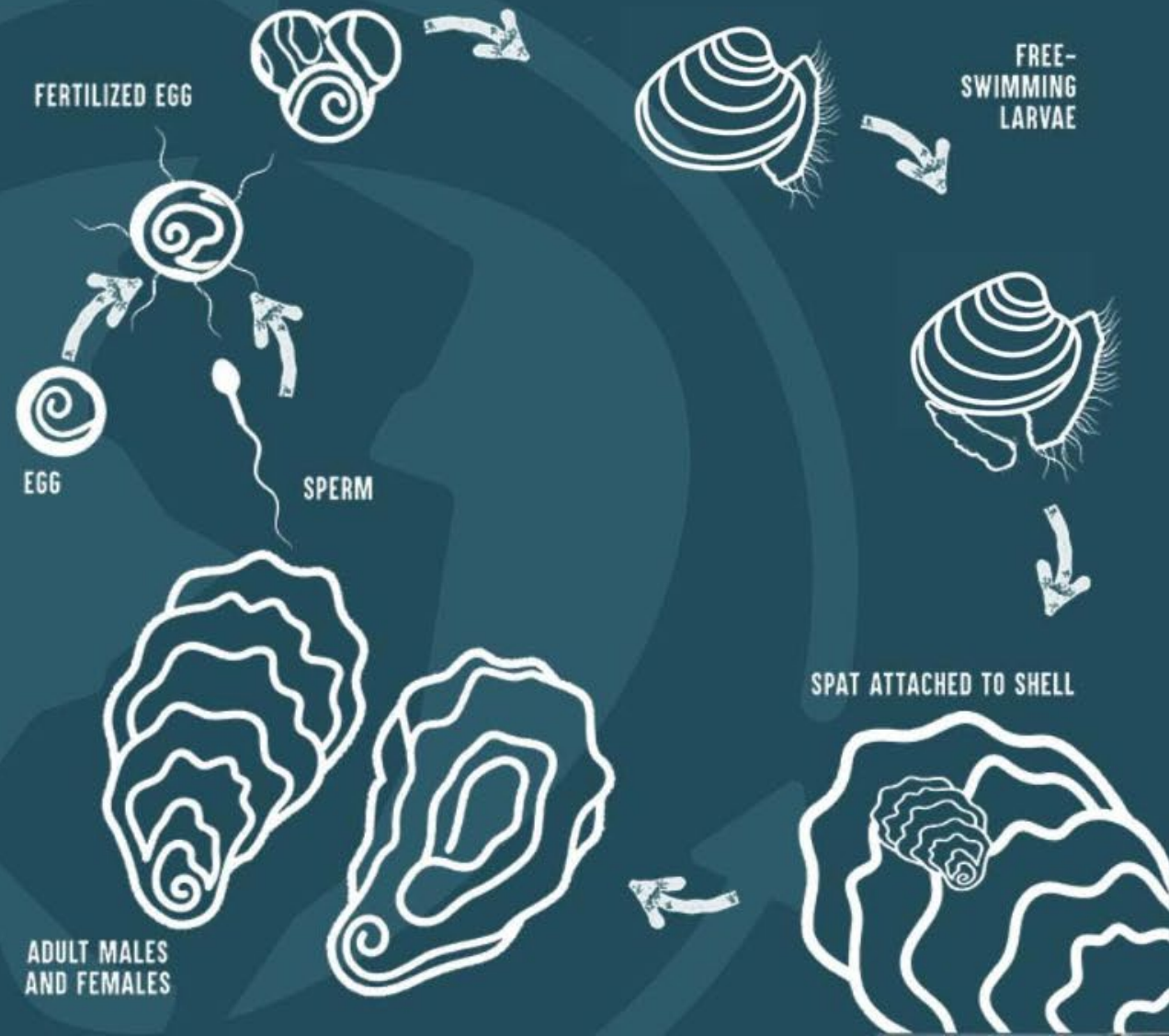
TO:

BAYSHORE DISCOVERY PRO

RESHIPPER'S CERT. No.	DATES RESHIPPED

LIFE CYCLE OF AN OYSTER

Oysters take approximately 2-3 years to reach maturity. Once eggs are fertilized, they spend approximately 2 weeks as free swimming larvae before attaching to a hard substrate where they will spend the rest of their development. Oysters form reefs that create natural protective habitats for other species.

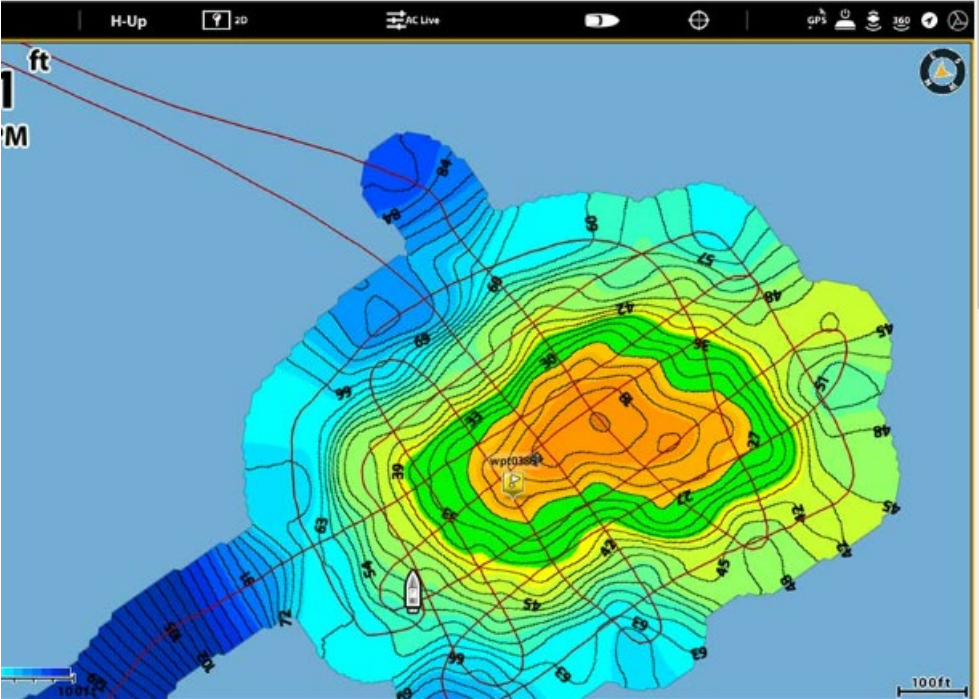




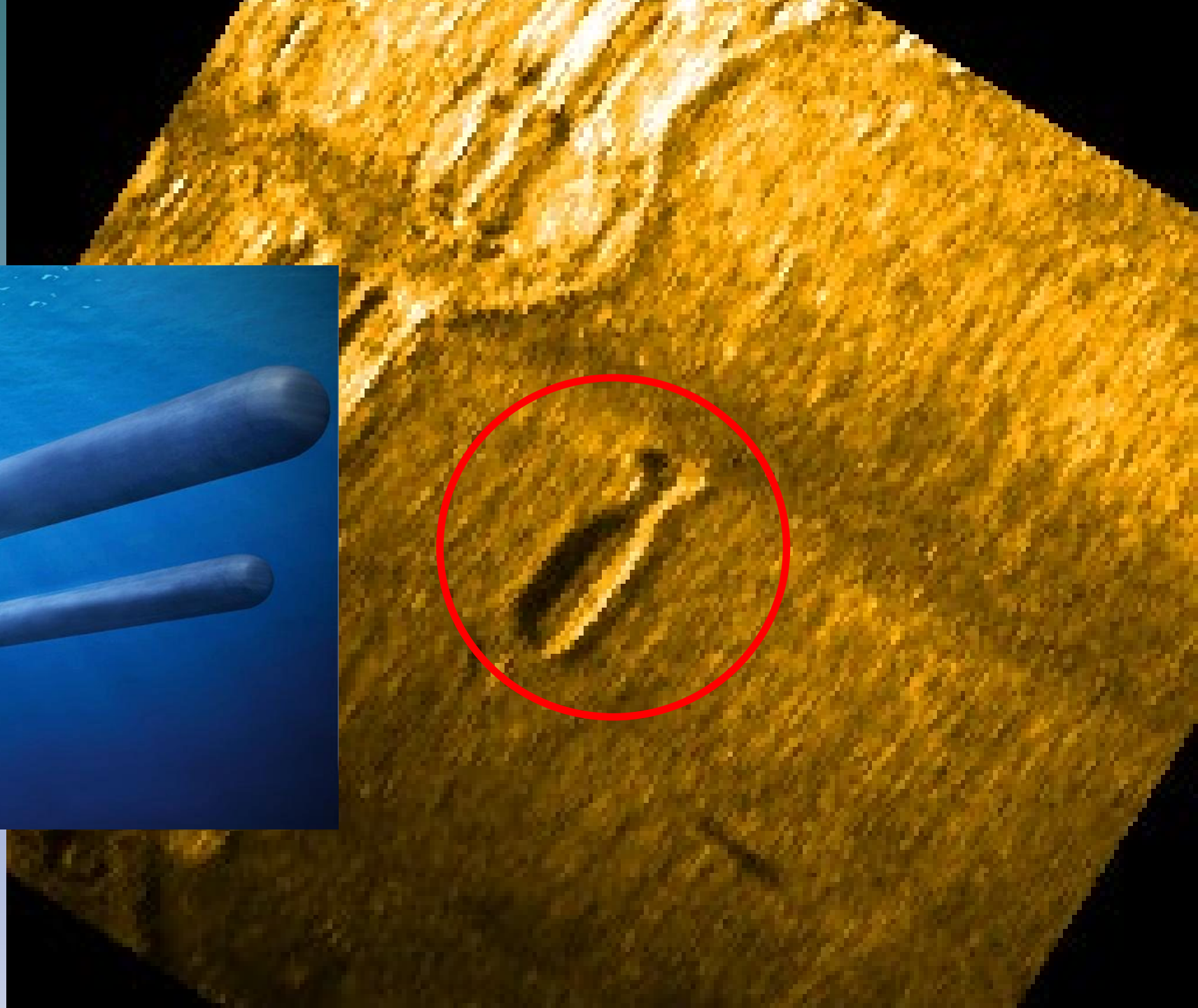
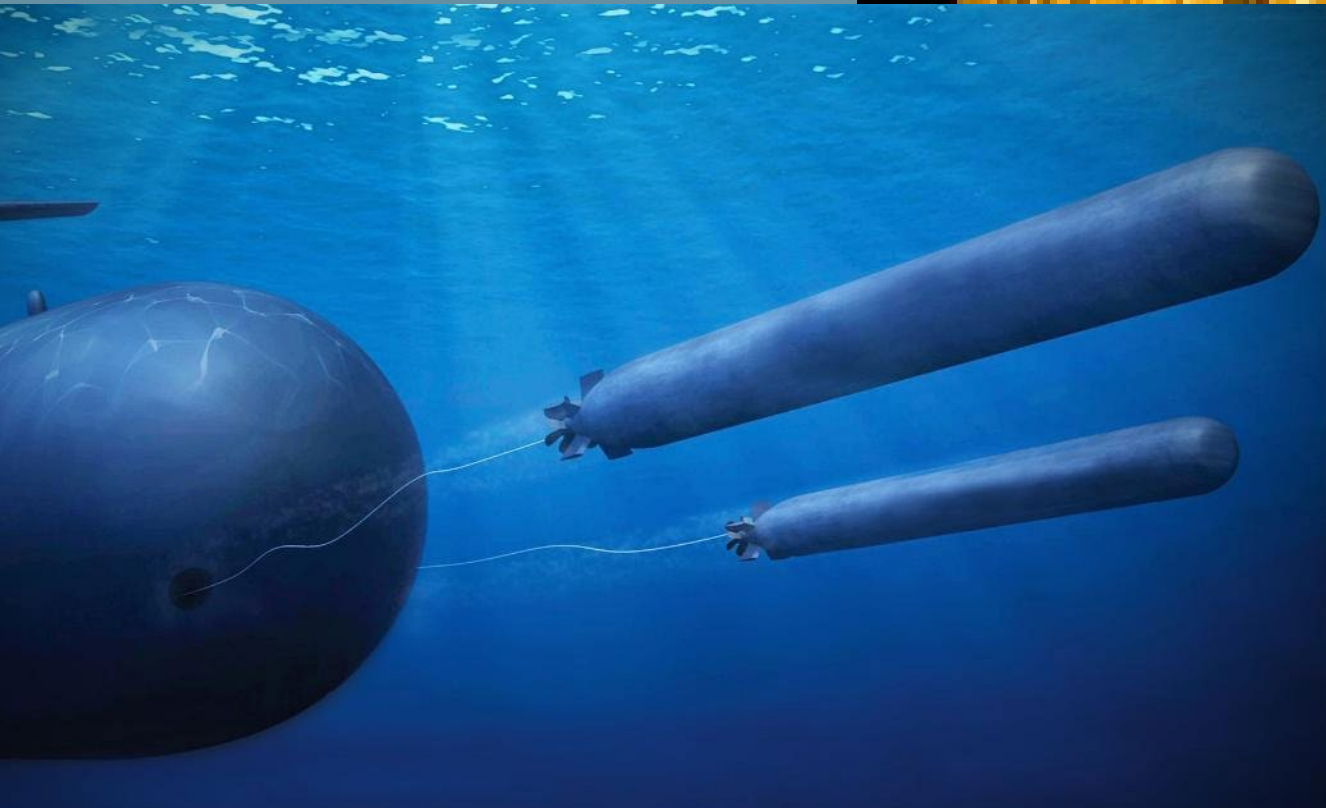




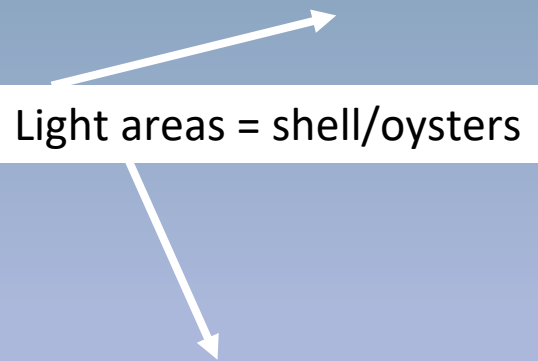




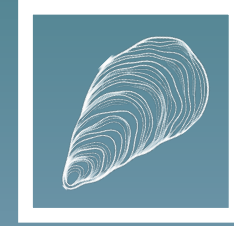




Light areas = shell/oysters

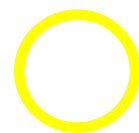
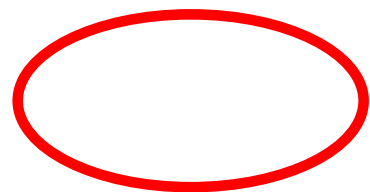
A white rectangular box containing the text "Light areas = shell/oysters". Two white arrows originate from the top-right corner of the box: one points diagonally upwards and to the right, and the other points diagonally downwards and to the right.

Main Oyster Reef Systems



Mullica River Reefs

Atlantic and Ocean Co.





NJDEP FISH AND WILDLIFE
MARINE RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

SHELL RECYCLING PROGRAM

NEW JERSEY



NEW JERSEY
MARINE RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION



SHELL RECYCLING PROGRAM

ATLANTIC CITY

Background

- Hard Rock Hotel & Casino had an interest in recycling their shell
- MRA agreed to partner as the receiver of the shell to be used for shell planting.



[← Messages](#)

Steve & Doug

[Details](#)

Hey Steve and Doug, are you meeting us for shell pickup?

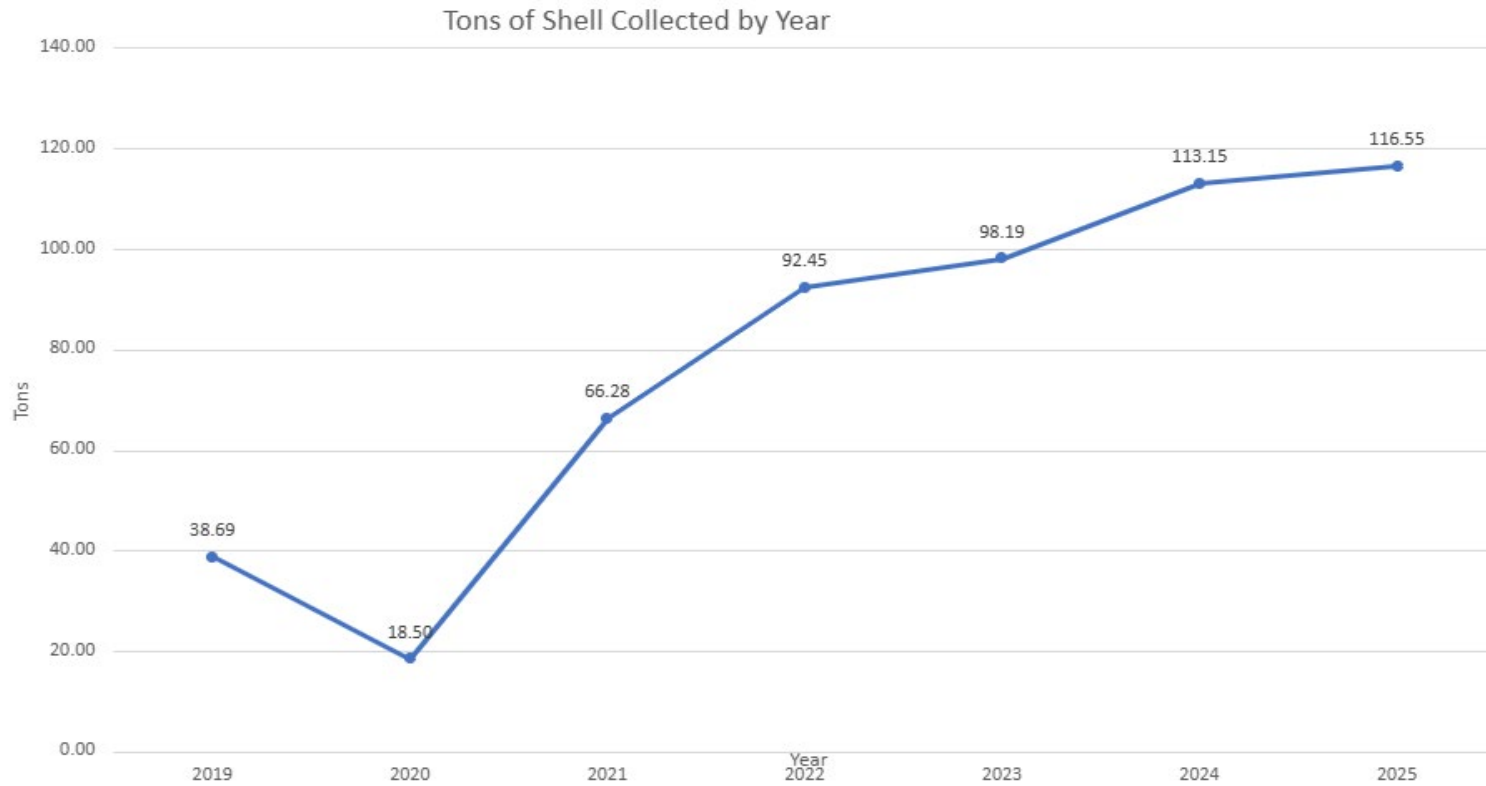
New phone who dis?

No seriously, are you guys coming?
big trouble. LOL

Nope



Collection History



Restaurant Partners



ATLANTIC CITY



DEAUVILLE INN



ATLANTIC CITY



2825



Barbara Seafood



New Jersey Ex Shell Recyclin Expansion

The Takeaway: A program to rescue disc
win for resilient shellfish and shorelines.

National Fisherman Since 1946

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November 10, 2025

New Jersey, Sysco to expand oyster shell recycling

NF by NF Staff in Mid-Atlantic, News

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NJDEP, Sysco Partnership Will Expand Shell Recycling in State

November 20, 2025

The N.J. Department of Environmental Protection's groundbreaking partnership with the Sysco Corp. will... significant expansion of a state program that uses seafood shells recycled from restaurants for creation... announced this week. According to the department, "The reefs can improve the ecological health of coas... to landfills, enhance climate resilience [...]

Read Next



March 2, 2026
Imtra Marine products in New Bedford



March 2, 2026
Lake Erie fisherman fined for abandoned nets, reporting violations

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tem

Market •



Expansion Plans

- Awarded \$1.2 million by NOAA CZM Program
- Three Year Project Began in Aug '24
- Three-pronged approach



1. Shell Collection

- Addition of a minimum of 15 restaurant partners (Atlantic & Cape May Counties)
- Develop a minimum of 3 public drop off locations
- Increased purchasing from alternative shell sources







2. Expanded Mullica River Shell Planting & Monitoring

- Before 2019 – the largest recorded planting was 5,000 bushels.
- Beginning last summer - plantings will be at least 25,000 bushels **per year**
- Increased monthly monitoring
- New spat recruitment study
- Increased disease testing and full genetic work up
- Modern bottom classification

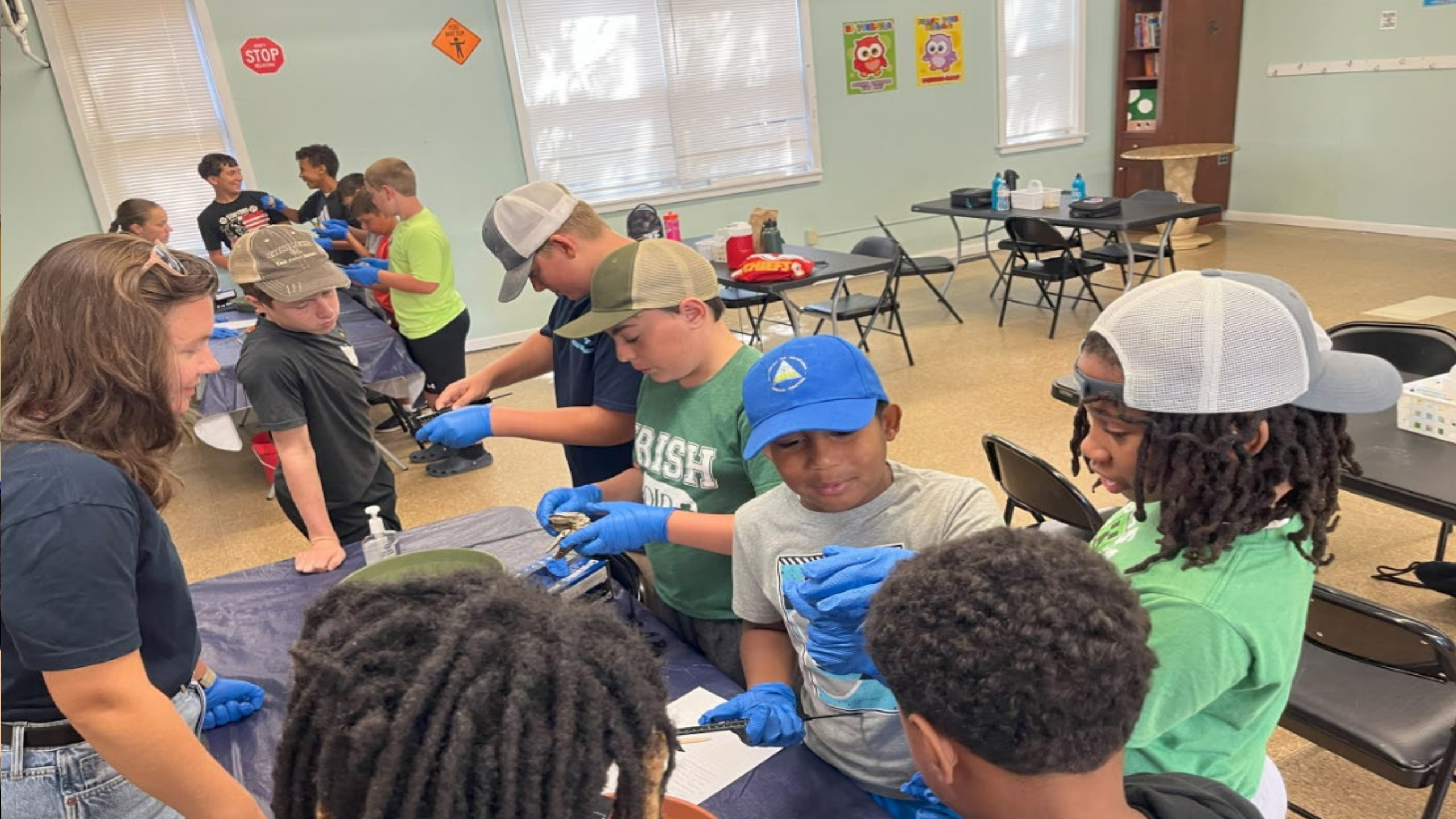


3. Education

- Implementing educational program within schools in partnership with the American Littoral Society
- 5 Atlantic County Schools to date
- Experiential learning opportunities

PROJECT





Mullica River Annual Shell Planting

➔ 2021: 2,570 bushels (~70 tons)

♻️ 2022: 5,000 bushels (~125 tons)

➔ 2023: 6,000 Bushels (~150 tons)

♻️ 2024: Over 10,000 bushels (~275 tons)

♻️ 2025: 26,000 bushels (~725 tons)

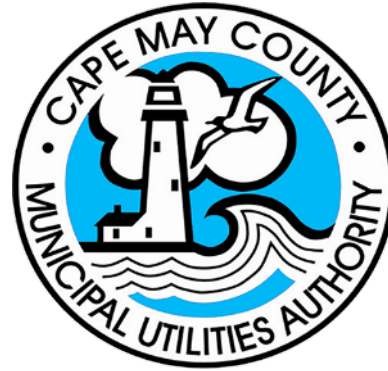


	Site	# Bushels planted	Avg spat/bu	Potential # oysters added to system
g Data (began in 2024)	MRSP 2025	26,000	318	8,264,674
	MRSP 2024	10,000	2380	23,800,000
y Data	MRSP 2023	6,300	562	3,540,600
	MRSP 2022	5,000	1057	5,285,000
	MRSP 2021	2,667	1449	3,864,483



	Plant Site	Spat per 37 qt Bushel		% Increase of recruitment on planted areas
		Natural	Planted	
g Data (began in 2024)	Moss Point 2025	4	142	3450.00%
	French's Point 2025	294	348	18.37%
	Upriver 2025	432	903	109.03%
	Fitney Bit 2025	46	225	389.13%
	Moss Point 2024	66	2380	3506.06%
	French's Point 2024	549	X	X

Partners & Supporters



American Culinary Federation
Professional Chefs Association
of South Jersey

Questions?



Complaints?
Call Steve and/or
Doug.



COASTAL Project

*CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES
ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES
FOR AQUACULTURE LEASES*

KRISTIN ADAMS

CONSERVATION SPECIALIST, OCEAN COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION
DISTRICT

AQUACULTURE SPECIALIST, US NRCS NJ



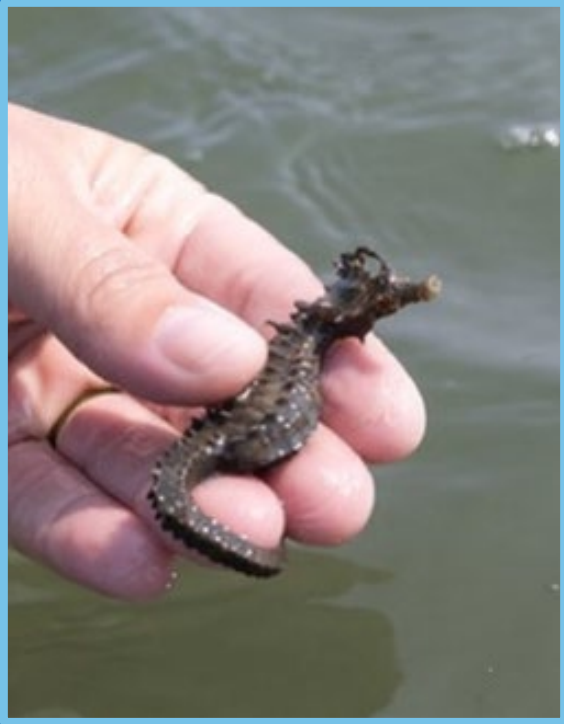
Project Overview:

THE COASTAL PROJECT IS A MULTI FACETED, PARTNER DRIVEN, FARMING FOR RESTORATION PROJECT.

PRODUCERS GROW OUT OYSTER SPAT ON SHELL FOR ONE GROWING SEASON BEFORE REEF DEPLOYMENT.



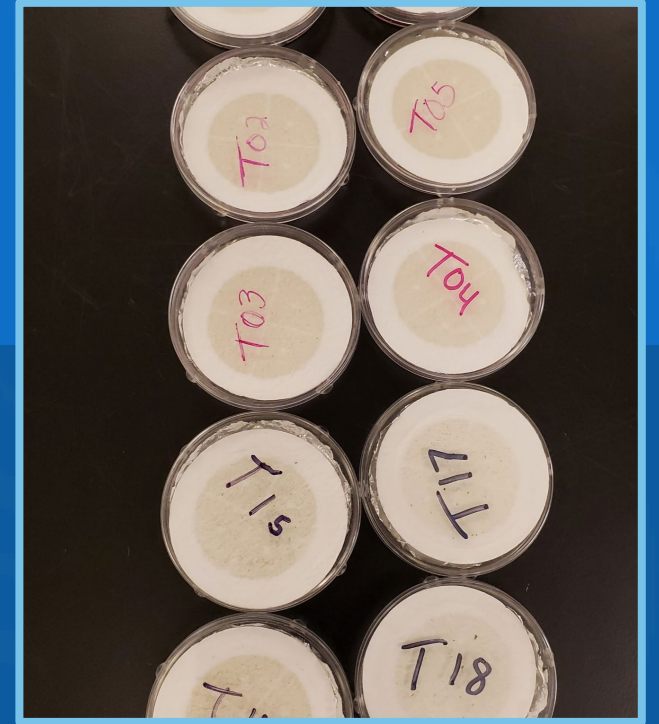
Overarching Goals of the COASTAL Project



Provide Aquatic Habitat



Link Producers with
Restoration Opportunities



Enhance Water Quality

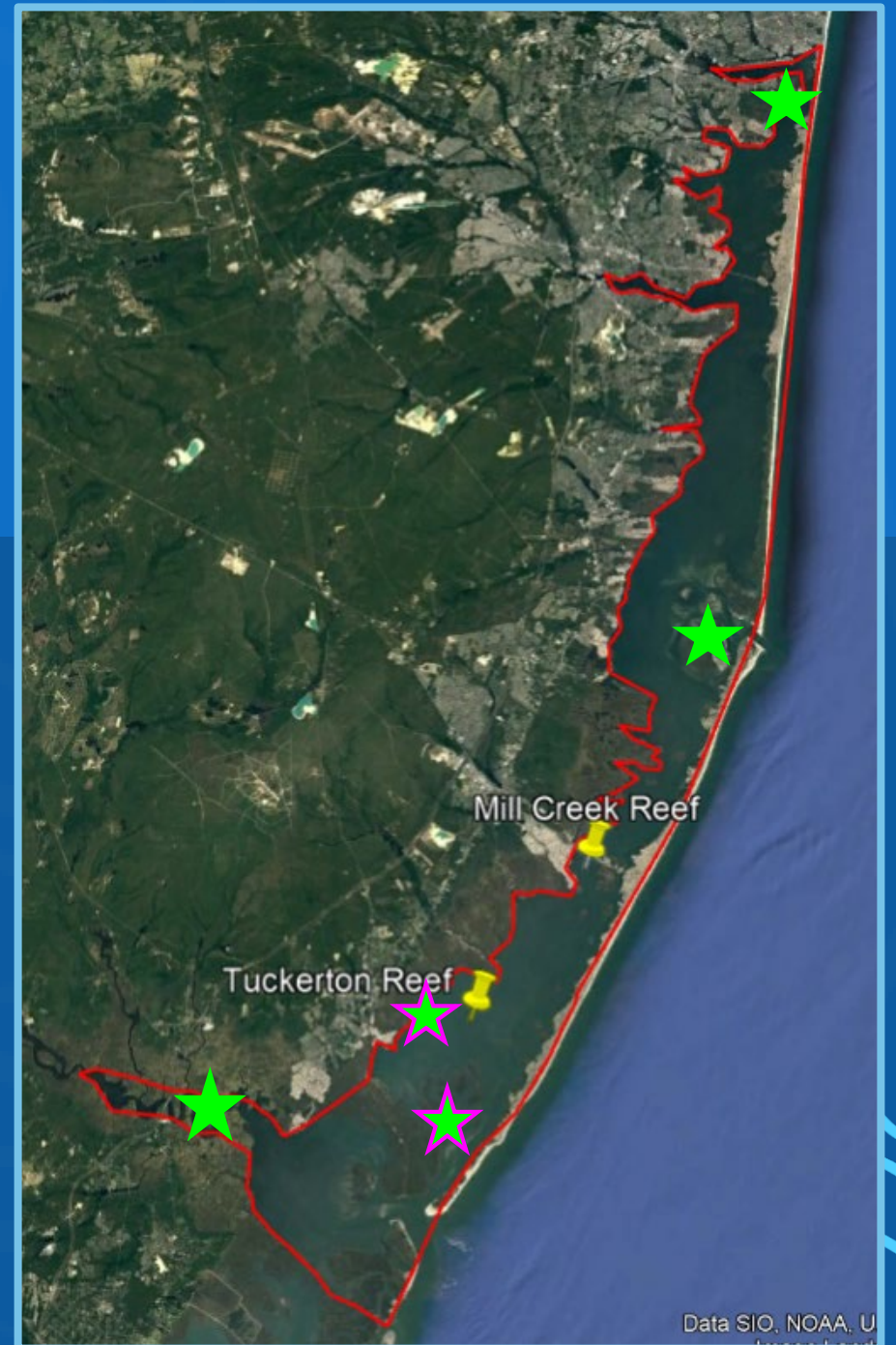
Funding Available



- Atlantic Coast Producers
- Funding Available: 2024-2027
- Grant Award ☐ \$961,228
- Funding for Producers ☐ \$765,859
 - \$672,859.60 from NRCS
 - \$48,000 from Barnegat Bay Partnership
 - \$45,000 from Jetty Rock Foundation

Scope of Project

- 9 Participating Producers
- Farm Sites
- Monitoring Sites
- Reef Sites





May-June [?]
Setting at Nursery



June-July [?]
Deploy on Farm



June-November [?]
Grow-Out

Producer Timeline

Late November [?]
Reef Planting



Research Component with Stockton University



- TUCKERTON REEF & MILL CREEK REEF
- PROVIDE AQUATIC HABITAT & ENHANCE WATER QUALITY
- MONITOR FARM LEASES & RESTORATION REEFS



Regional Conservation Partnership Program



GOVERNMENT + NONPROFITS + INDUSTRY + ACADEMIA

PARTNERS



 Technical Advisement & Assistance

 Financial Support

 Policy and Compliance

 Education and Outreach

 Concurrent Restoration Projects and Support

 Producer Support & Shell Recycling





Project Outcomes

- Oyster Restoration Partnership
- \$765,859.60 in Funding for Industry
- New, Replicable Conservation Approach
- New, Continuous Funding Opportunity through USDANRCS NJ
- Enhancement of Oyster Restoration Re
- Provide Aquatic Habitat & Enhance Water Quality
- Research Opportunities
- District Diversification

Lessons Learned



- Connect & Learn from Industry
- Adapt to your State or Region
- Make the Call and Connections
- Whole Project Approach
- Think Outside of the Box

Next Steps for Collaboration, Restoration & Research

Expansion ☐ Additional Producers? Geographic Region?
Collaboration ☐ Additional Partners? Partner Objectives?
Monitoring ☐ Methods? Locations?



FOR INQUIRIES REGARDING THE COASTAL PROJECT
KADAMS@SOILDISTRICT.ORG

FOR INQUIRIES ON PRODUCER OPPORTUNITIES
KRISTIN.ADAMS@USDA.GOV

Thank you!

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SUSAN ALLEN, KYLE GRONOSTAJSKI & KRISTIN ADAMS

