

Restoring the Legendary Lynnhaven Oyster

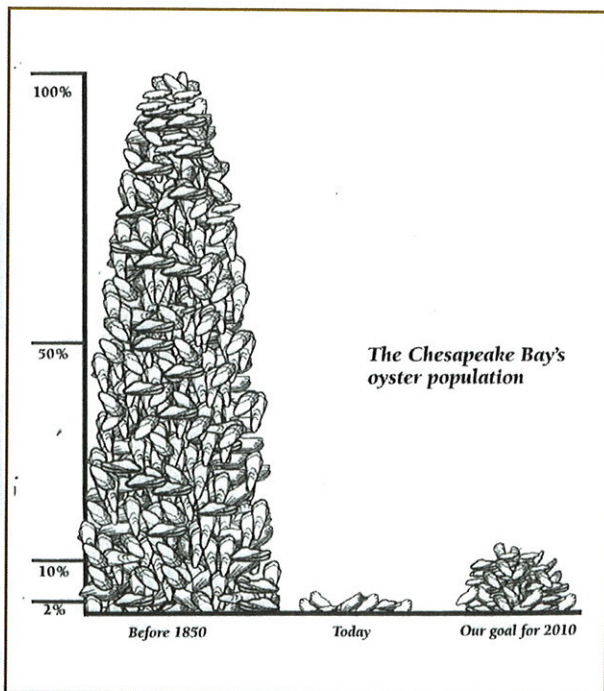
The Lynnhaven River has long been legendary for its abundant and delicate plate-sized oysters that were once coveted by kings, queens and presidents. We work to restore the legend.

From Destruction to Recovery:

The famed Lynnhaven oyster is both a symbol of the Lynnhaven River's history and was once a keystone species in the ecosystem, providing extensive water filtration, as well as food and habitat to myriad species of fish and other creatures that live in the river. Unfortunately, the once prominent oyster population in the Lynnhaven River has been decimated by overharvesting, loss of oyster habitat, oyster disease and decreased water quality during the last century. By 1990, the Lynnhaven's oyster population had fallen to a mere 1% of historic abun-

dance, and this decline has had drastically negative consequences for water quality and marine habitat in the river. However, in 2005, scientists observed that we are reversing the trend!

Several partners are now working together with great success to restore native oysters to the Lynnhaven River. We have built a series of sanctuary oyster reefs in the river. Thousands of student and citizen "oyster gardeners" have raised well over 1 million oysters for Lynnhaven oyster sanctuary reefs. These community-raised oysters now reproduce on the sanctuaries so their babies also contribute to the Lynnhaven's developing oyster population and to our river's impressive oyster recovery. As the Lynnhaven's oyster reefs come to life, the river's water quality continues to improve through oyster filtration, fish and other organisms again find food and habitat on oyster reefs, and anglers have new hotspots for catching sportfish.



The Lynnhaven's once abundant oyster population has declined by 99%, but recent restoration efforts are reversing the trend. PHOTO CREDIT: Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Perpetuate Oyster Recovery through Oyster Gardening:

YOU can contribute to this exciting oyster and ecosystem recovery by becoming a school or citizen oyster gardener and by encouraging your friends and neighbors to get involved. Each year, oyster gardeners obtain baby oysters from us in the summer and raise them in tributaries of the Lynnhaven River for a year. Gardeners then return their oysters to us on our annual "Round Up" dates, so that we can transport them to sanctuary reefs where they will live out their lives, happily filtering and producing the river's future oyster population.



Each summer, oyster gardeners return their one-year old oysters to us so that we can transplant them onto sanctuary reefs in the Lynnhaven.

PHOTO CREDIT: Karen Underkoffler.

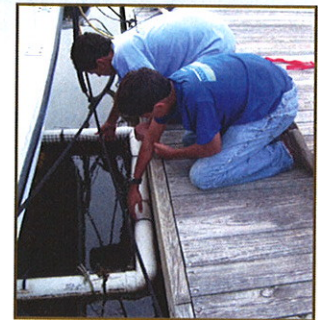
It's Easy: All you need to have is access to a dock on your property, your friend's property, or at your marina. All new oyster gardeners attend an orientation workshop to learn oyster gardening techniques and to obtain baby oysters. Citizen gardeners attend a 1-hour workshop in Virginia Beach, which is co-sponsored by Lynnhaven River NOW and Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). Workshop dates and times are posted on our website, www.LynnhavenRiverNOW.org, and on CBF's site, www.cbf.org/virginiaoysters. Citizens must register by calling (757) 622-1964 or e-mailing rsvp@cbf.org. Separate teacher workshops are also available each year, in partnership with Oyster Reef Keepers of Virginia. School workshop dates are also on our website, and teachers may register by calling (757) 962-5398 or e-mailing oysterreefkeeper@yahoo.com.

It's Rewarding: Oyster gardening is not only good for the river; it's also fun to do and rewarding to know that you are contributing to the restoration of the Lynnhaven. Each time you pull up your oysters, you will

see that they support a thriving community of harmless miniature organisms, like little fish, little crabs, little shrimp. Little hands love to explore the diversity, and you will immediately realize why oyster reefs provide such vital habitat in a healthy ecosystem. Each oyster that you raise will be able to filter thousands of gallons of Lynnhaven River water. For example, a 3" oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day in the summer! Oysters are amazing little creatures, but they can't restore water quality and habitat in the Lynnhaven effectively until their population recovers. Oysters need your help, and it's not hard to do.

Support Oyster Restoration

You can contribute to this oyster recovery story even if oyster gardening is not for you. Lynnhaven River NOW has created a designated Reef Restoration Fund that is earmarked for oyster reef construction, oyster shell collec-



tion, oyster habitat protection, and other such oyster restoration activities. Funds contributed to our Reef Restoration Fund will be used as matching dollars in grants, thus your dollar contribution will be leveraged for more oyster restoration dollars. Simply write "Reef Restoration Fund" on the memo line of your check and send it to Lynnhaven River NOW, 1608 Pleasure House Road, Suite 108, Virginia Beach, VA 23455. Interested oyster lease holders can also donate a portion of their oyster lease to Lynnhaven River NOW so that we may use it for oyster restoration activities. Contact our office for details at (757) 962-5398.

We look forward to working with you to restore the legend!



1608 PLEASURE HOUSE ROAD SUITE 108
VIRGINIA BEACH VA 23455 • 757-962-5398