

ReClam The Bay

2020 Annual Report



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For the full Annual Report and photos, please visit us
at reclamthebay.org

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thank you for your interest in ReClam The Bay. The year 2020 presented significant challenges for all of us. During the year of COVID-19, dedicated people stepped up and made a huge difference. The big word in 2020 was "pivot" - how people and organizations could stay on mission by making significant changes to the original direction. ReClam The Bay (RCTB) volunteers were masterful at it. The mission of RCTB is to improve the condition of the estuary. We provide education about the Barnegat Bay watershed (which includes Barnegat Bay, Manahawkin Bay and Little Egg Harbor Bay) - how to conserve and improve it through shellfish-related, sustainable and resilient stewardship projects.

This report provides highlights of our activities last year, text only. To see our full, annual report, complete with pictures and charts, please visit our website - reclamthebay.org.

Thank you for your support. We're working hard every day to earn your trust and respect.

All the Best,

Rick Bushnell, President

SUMMARY OF HIGHLIGHTS

This past year presented enormous challenges, yet RCTB was able to continue our critical work and stay on mission and task.

Shellfish Production

Our upwellers - shellfish nurseries - are not only our production facilities but also provide excellent teaching opportunities as our members interact with hundreds of visitors throughout the growing season.

Nine of ten upwellers were fully operational this past year growing more than 600,000 clams, 5,000 oysters and several hundred bay scallops.

RCTB members presented plans to the Borough of Tuckerton, New Jersey, to construct an additional upweller production facility.

This will also serve as a backdrop to explain RCTB's role in the Iowa Court and South Green Street shoreline stabilization projects undertaken by Little Egg Harbor Township and the Borough of Tuckerton. The Iowa Court project required the installation of 700 feet of living shoreline and the Green Street Project will require 200 feet. The living shoreline is composed of shell bags containing spat (juvenile oysters) that will create a habitat for oysters and several other species of marine life. Over time, the habitat will colonize oysters through the natural spawning process, as well as other marine life. Two of RCTB's upweller tanks were used to grow oyster larvae on cured shell used in these living shoreline projects. The technique is called "remote set." We introduce about two million larvae into water circulated in a tank containing the shell bags. In approximately two weeks, the larvae "set" or affix themselves onto the shells in the bags. The shell bags are then removed and taken to the living shoreline project.

Community Events

Community events offer RCTB volunteers the opportunity to reach out to the public, provide some education, raise funds and sell RCTB merchandise. While most events were cancelled or postponed, our volunteers were able to identify other venues for outreach including the Farmer's Markets in Surf City and Barnegat, and The Mainland and The Boat Yard in Manahawkin.

We took advantage of this “downtime” to revamp our merchandising efforts with some new designs from **JeTTY**, the most recognizable surf and skate apparel brand on the East Coast.

Despite all that 2020 threw at us, we were still able to reach more than 1,000 people at various venues by reconfiguring our educational sessions at our upwellers, the New Jersey Maritime Museum, the LBI Foundation for the Arts and Sciences and the Surf City Bay Beach.

In The Bay

In addition to putting shellfish in the estuary, RCTB participates in projects that use shellfish to provide habitat and to create living shorelines to protect our environment. In conjunction with our partner, Mordecai Land Trust, RCTB:

- provided weekly boat ferry service for scientists from Stockton University to Mordecai Island to observe and report waterfowl and turtle population and nesting sites,
- monitored the erosion of plant life and soil, and accretion of sand behind the shell bags placed at water’s edge on Mordecai Island and on the Army Corps dredge site fill location,
- monitored and maintained the existing shell bag living shoreline,
- filled approximately 500 shell bags destined for the Mordecai Island living shoreline.
- gathered salt hay and constructed multiple bird nesting sites on Mordecai for the 2021 arrival of Black Simmers and other waterfowl.

In the fall of 2020, The Pew Charitable Trust and The Nature Conservancy established a program called Supporting Oyster Aquaculture and Restoration (SOAR). Locally it purchased over 620,000 oysters to add to the Stockton Reef in Little Egg Harbor Bay. RCTB volunteers helped **Seven Bridges Oyster Farm** bag 12,000 oysters to support this effort.

Outreach and Education

Outreach and education efforts underwent a bit of a transformation, as well. RCTB partner, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and its Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program, provide the education which is at the heart of RCTB. Recently renamed the Rutgers Coastal Stewardship Program, it went 100% virtual.

This enabled more RCTB members and potential members to attend and also broadened the reach.

Our annual Open House which is designed to introduce people to RCTB and encourage participation, was replaced with a series of videos, available on our website - reclamthebay.org. They explain our mission and display our shellfish growing process.

Shellfish in the Classroom, our school education program followed suit with a series of videos that can be used as part of classroom virtual learning.

People are interested in outdoor learning experiences and the Clam Trail provides a fun “scavenger hunt.” The RCTB website contains a map depicting the locations of giant decorated fiberglass clams. Each of the 30 or so clams, found all around Southern Ocean County, has a plaque with an ecological fact. The game is to find the clam and record the fact. The Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce is making the Clam Trail part of its Land And Sea Passport which will reach 15,000 people and be linked to the Chamber and RCTB website.

The Holgate Taxpayers Association generously sponsored one of the clams. It was recently refurbished and is on display in Holgate at the southern end of Long Beach Island.

Learning by doing is a valuable experience of the RCTB program. One of the students at the Ocean County Vocational and Technical High School, Marine Academy for Technology and Environmental Science (MATES) used clams provided by RCTB to study metabolism. A final report will be available in the winter of 2021.

Based on the living shoreline stabilization projects at Mordecai Island, Iowa Court and Green Street, RCTB developed a presentation that will serve to educate our membership about the techniques and lessons learned.

RCTB members have been gathering field information about natural oyster spat production and spat set in the estuary around the High Bar Harbor section of LBI. The area under study is adjacent to an oyster farm operated by **40 North Oyster Farms**. They have documented their observations through hundreds of pictures and extensive field notes that will be evaluated during the winter of 2021.

INVESTMENT IN THE BARNEGAT BAY ESTUARY

RCTB investments come from a variety of sources. Financial contributions and revenues raised from fundraising and merchandise sales accounted for 16 %, in-kind goods and services represent 4 % and the hours spent by our devoted volunteers represented 80 %. The result was an investment of \$267,000 in the future of the Barnegat Bay Estuary. **RCTB was able to leverage the financial support we received by four times through members' volunteering.**

OUR MEMBERS

Since our inception in 2005, ReClam The Bay (RCTB) has been an all-volunteer "army." Our volunteer members are the core of our operation. They serve as upweller captains, participate in construction, education, project management and the requisite 'back office' functions. They are assisted by other members who, by devoting over 20 hours of service each year earn the title of *Volunteer*. There are about 70 volunteers, supporting our educators, participating in fairs and festivals, and handling the many little things that come up while raising about 600,000 clams and millions of oyster spat, while reaching an average of 10,000 people in a typical year.

RCTB also relies on a number of interns - children, adults, students, locals and vacationers who assist in maintaining our upwellers.

Despite restrictions and limitations imposed as we battle COVID-19, RCTB members still managed to volunteer over 6,100 hours of dedicated service in 2020. While overall volunteer hours were down compared to 2019, the average work effort per member increased by 12%. Many members are graduates of the Coastal Stewardship Course offered by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program (BBSRP) where they receive training about shellfish aquaculture, oyster reef restoration, maintaining and improving water quality in the watersheds and bays, and hands on instruction on how to grow shellfish. Since our inception in 2005, more than 600 RCTB volunteers have been educated through the BBSRP who, with other RCTB volunteers, have put approximately 15 million clams, more than 4 million individual oysters, and millions of

oysters as spat on shell in Barnegat Bay. The organization is supported by membership dues, donations and other financial support. **Approximately 400 individuals and businesses contributed to RCTB activities in 2020** through direct financial support and volunteer efforts.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE FOR 2021

With the continued support of our donors and volunteers, RCTB will be able to expand our efforts to: 1) educate, 2) raise awareness 3) grow shellfish, 4) research the feasibility of incorporating scallops and ribbed mussels into the program and 5) learn more about the bay as a habitat so we can better monitor and improve conditions.

We will also continue to work closely with the Mordecai Land Trust. Thanks to funding from a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection grant, we will expand the living shoreline to stabilize and protect Mordecai Island from further erosion.

THANK YOU

Since 2005, your generous support has helped us to provide education about the Barnegat Bay watershed – how to conserve and improve it through shellfish-related, sustainable and resilient stewardship projects.

JOIN US

VOLUNTEER

From raising shellfish in our upweller nurseries, to providing educational sessions at community events and in classrooms, to fundraising, to bagging shell and building living shorelines, we leverage thousands of volunteer hours to educate about water quality in our bays and the impact shellfish have on our coastal way of life.

Join us at reclamthebay.org/volunteer

DONATE

As an all-volunteer non-profit 501c3 organization, we rely on the generosity of people like you to support our mission of improving the condition of the estuary through education about the Barnegat Bay - how to conserve it and improve it through shellfish-related, sustainable and resilient stewardship projects. We grow and maintain millions of baby clams and oysters in the Barnegat Bay Watershed which includes Barnegat Bay, Manahawkin Bay and Little Egg Harbor Bay. We want people to understand that healthy bays and healthy shellfish are dependent on one another. Help us give them a better home so they can give us a better home and save our beautiful bays.

Support our work today at reclamthebay.org/donate



If you shop on Amazon, you may know that Amazon donates a portion of sales to charity. Using your Amazon account at smile.amazon.com gives you the option to

direct a portion of Amazon's donations to groups like ReClam The Bay and we hope you will make us your charity of choice.

ReClam The Bay Officers and Board Members

Rick Bushnell, President
Lou Fellner, Vice President
Cheryl McCurry, Secretary
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Wes Dalzell
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Al Fasano
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