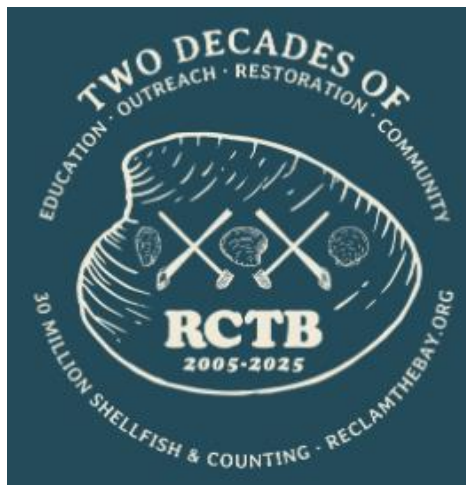
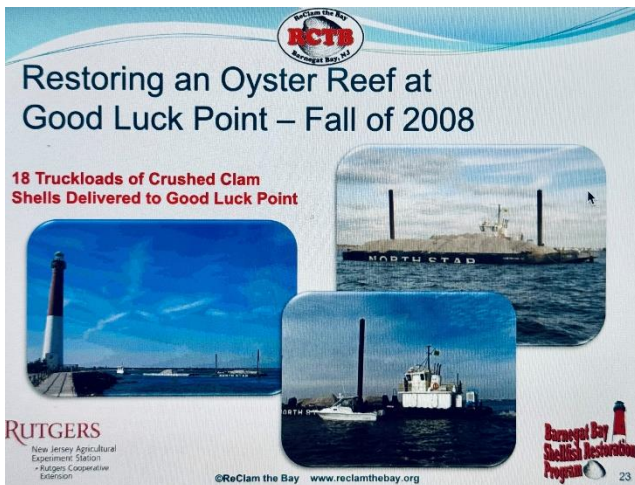


# ReClam the Bay / Bay Notes

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Reclamthebay.org / 68 Main Street, Waretown, NJ 08758



As you will be hearing throughout 2025, this is RCTB's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and there are plans for it to be a memorable one. Our members will have access to more field trips to learn about our Bay and neighboring marine sites, more opportunities to support shellfish growth at upwellers and natural habitats, more educational outreach events, and more chances to be part of the RCTB community at fairs, festivals and celebrations.

Out of a modest start in 2005, this organization has grown into a respected and recognized entity along the Atlantic Coast and beyond, responsible for educating citizens, young and old; supporting water quality improvement and coastal protection, and driving research that resolves questions about Barnegat Bay's marine ecosystem that were previously unanswered, all while training new scientists, from pre-K to university level. The images at the top of the page are from our very early years, to 2025, our vicennial year. We hope that you like the anniversary edition logo.

As of 2024, ReClam the Bay has grown almost 32 million hard clams, oysters, surf clams and bay scallops, and returned them to natural habitats. While doing this, it has also educated at least 12,000 young students on Barnegat Bay's uniquely beneficial resources, in classrooms, and countless more on beaches and at our upwellers where these juvenile shellfish are nurtured. RCTB has traveled to speak to well over 100,000 adults across NJ and neighboring states – all of this to raise awareness of the Bay's fragile balance between robustly serving millions of people in our region, or collapse.

By increasing programs for putting the shellfish we grow to work increasing the Bay's health and vitality, working with similar organizations and regulatory agencies to expand joint projects, and building up important research to benefit more stakeholders, we stand on the shoulders of our founders who saw what might be accomplished – and then did it.

Located in Virginia Beach, VA, the [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#) has been working since 1966 to create a healthy and resilient Bay for the 18 million people connected directly to it. Since 2020, the CBF has been shifting the majority of its oyster setting work to a [floating oyster restoration center](#), employing on-site water and food sources to raise happy well-adjusted juvenile oysters while facilitating delivery of these spat, on shell bags and reef-balls for reef construction. The double-barge holds six 850-gal setting tanks, and should increase CBF's oyster production capacity in VA to 15 million oysters per year! The oyster restoration center was funded by a collective of private donors, regional organizations and universities, and is accessible by the public. Could RCTB replicate this in our Bay?



**This Issue:**

**Our 2025 program plans**

Spat-capture study in tandem w/NJ DEP; expanded oyster research; member education trips; Fairs, festivals and more



**Three Questions with RCTB's Linda Peters**

HighBar Harbor's lead citizen scientist talks about her observations on our Bay shellfish habitats



**RCTB visits Baywater Seafood in Snow Hill, MD to learn how they grow their amazing scallops and oysters**

RCTB has lots of projects and events planned for this 2025 year, including:

- Adding a “living shoreline” simulation tank at our Island Beach State Park site. Joining the upweller at IBSP, it will allow land-based demonstration of the living oyster colonies, built on cultch shell to dampen wave energy, expand marine habitats, and filter bay water to balance our local ecosystem
- While working on plans to help build new living shorelines at several Bay locations, RCTB volunteers will assist construction of shoreline installations inside IBSP, and Barnegat Bay Partnership advise a shoreline design project by Stevens Institute near Ocean Gate
- In addition to being on-track for a new record number of students taught with RCTB’s “Shellfish in the Classroom” across the state, RCTB is sponsoring research being performed by a record FOUR college students (see more below), as well as other studies in the Bay that are supported by additional interns at upwellers and shoreline sites
- More field trips to locations like RU’s Haskin Shellfish Research Lab & Bivalve Museum in August; Salt-marsh Safari/Tour of Wetlands Institute; Sweet Amalia Oyster Farm; Viking Village & Lighthouse tour; multiple varied trips out to Sedge Island and its education center, in addition to tours of all RCTB upwellers and spat-setting tanks

All of this in addition to available [Coastal Stewardship](#) and [Volunteer Master Naturalist](#) courses, “Paddle for the Edge” kayaking, and a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering for all members in November. Details will be found in future newsletters, or even better, on our website’s events page, along with upweller maintenance dates/times. Hope to see you there!

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, RCTB again received a generous donation from the Bill & Ginger Winder Family Foundation. This organization supports environmental protection and animal rights projects around the US, and has been helping us achieve Bay restoration and public education goals for *five years*. Their founder and key foundation members visited the Holiday Harbor marina, where they are sponsoring the upweller tank and its major maintenance.



RCTB is immensely fortunate for recognition by, and the essential support of groups like the Winder Foundation.

RCTB’s **Linda Peters**, a retired physical therapist, who since the early 1990s on LBI has been in awe of the marine life, while also wondering why there were so few natural oysters. She now drives independent research at High Bar Harbor, turning her focus from rehabbing people to rehabbing the oyster populations.

**What are you working on now?** Right now, I’m taking natural oysters that are ailing, and helping them recover in a healthier environment before returning them to a selected reef site, which is then monitored to assist their survival.

**Is there a project that you are proudest of?** I will be proud if I can build a self-sustaining oyster reef at High Bar, and I suspect that a percentage of these reefs can be, although they will require human assistance and monitoring to survive ongoing changes in our ecology, that challenge natural oyster survival in our Bay.

**What trend have you been noticing in the High Bar area?** Last year, near the reefs, I’m excited to observe more natural spat formation on live oysters than I have ever seen! Because of this, we are exploring natural spat capture using commercial spat collectors and other methods, for growing oysters to adulthood.

Recently, several RCTB members traveled to Snow Hill, MD to visit [Baywater Seafood](#), a 2020 start-up raising oysters, bluecrabs and bay scallops for restaurants and supermarkets. The intention was to see how their shellfish in Chincoteague Bay grow at such dramatic rates (almost twice as quickly as in Barnegat Bay), and grab a few bay scallops for SitC programs. What we found was a small dedicated team of shellfish aquaculturists that intimately knows their region and its own optimal habitat for crabs and shellfish. They know how to deal with their predators, which in their area include raccoons and river otters, and have invested in understanding the preferences of their bay scallops (acquired as babies from NY and NC) and oysters, now being raised from purchased and natural spat capture. Another visit is being planned, and RCTB has offered our help with aquaculture questions.



This year, RCTB has expanded its support through *Save Barnegat Bay’s* research grant program to four college students. They are **Megan Sharp**, working on novel social media & website projects for RCTB

**Sydney Gawason** (Univ VT), using GIS mapping & data mining to prioritize regions of the Bay for remediation and NJDEP reclassification as “approved” for shellfish harvesting

**Christopher Born** (UNC/Wilmington), studying water quality/chemistry in the northern Barnegat Bay for oyster spawning

**Matthew Senior** (Thos Jefferson Univ) investigating oyster bonding differences depending on substrate & Bay region

If you see these young researchers around our Bay or at upweller sites, say hello. Don’t be surprised if they also request your input.

Last year, young [Demi Johnson](#) was, out of 2100 submissions, a winner in [National Geographic’s Sling-shot Challenge](#) with an oyster growing project that started when she was a Girl Scout 7<sup>th</sup>-grader. She has now raised more than 1100 oysters in St. Martin Bayou, helping restore MS’s threatened population. Demi also donated her \$1000 award to the Oyster Gardening Program in her state, who helped her start.