



ReClam The Bay 2024 Annual Report



FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND THE PRESIDENT

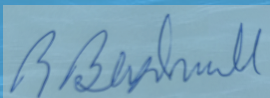
Welcome to our 2024 Annual Report. In 2024, our members, volunteers, and assets grew as ReClam the Bay (RCTB) continued to reach deeper into the community. We have had our best year so far. We now operate 13 upwellers (shellfish nurseries) within the Barnegat Bay estuary (Barnegat Bay, Manahawkin Bay, and Little Egg Harbor Bay), which covers over 42 miles of shoreline from the Point Pleasant Canal in the north to Little Egg Harbor Inlet in the south.

RCTB is a 501(c)3 environmental charitable organization. Our mission is to conserve and improve the estuary through shellfish-related, sustainable, and resilient stewardship projects.

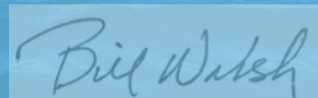
Activities include growing shellfish (primarily clams and oysters) in the wild and in upwellers (shellfish nurseries), experimenting with growing techniques, habitat creation, and shoreline stabilization. We reach out to the community to elevate understanding, promote participation and work with local municipalities and organizations to develop living shorelines solutions.

We are an all-volunteer group that relies on the generosity of our members, organizations and individuals for human capital and financial support. Consider joining us. Your contribution will have a strong, positive impact on our ability to continue offering quality programs to the public, including hands-on and classroom education, and programs to stimulate interest and action by others through sharing our knowledge and mission at various educational venues and community events.

This year (2025) is a special year. As we enter our 20th year, we are in a strong position to continue this critical work. Read on to hear more about our passion for the coastal way of life. Thank you from the bottom of our bays!



Rick Bushnell, Chairman



Bill Walsh, President

Contents

3 - Highlights

4 - Operations

6 - In The Bay

8 - Outreach & Education

**11 - Investment in Barnegat
Bay Estuary**

12 - Our Members

14 - Looking to the Future

15 - Thank You

16 - Join Us

17 - Officers and Board

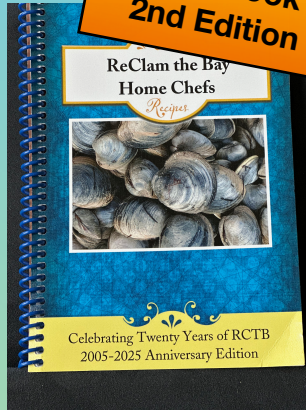
HIGHLIGHTS

**Shellfish in Classroom
reaches 1,300 students**



**Research
Committee
Established**

**CookBook
2nd Edition**



Hard Clam Research

1.6 million spat for Shoreline Projects



**New
Traders Cove Upweller**

**New Upweller Site #13
Normandy Beach**



**Internships
&
Scholarships**

**Website
&
Communications
Improvements**

**2nd Place Ship Bottom
Christmas Parade**



**Expanded Jenkinson's
Aquarium Collaboration**

**A Record Year For
Community
Support!**



**Jackson Bubnowski
Eagle Scout
Sieve Project**

OPERATIONS

Shellfish Production

RCTB uses a system of land-based upwellers to grow hard clams and oysters. An upweller is a shellfish nursery. Shellfish are raised in a series of silos suspended in a tank that uses flowing baywater as the primary method for supplying food, nutrients and oxygen. Silos have a screen bottom that allows the water to flow upward through the silo and then back out to the bay.

RCTB operated 13 upwellers this year at the following locations - Barnegat Light, Beach Haven, Brant Beach Yacht Club, Cattus Island, Holiday Harbor, Island Beach State Park, Mantoloking Yacht Club, Mariner's Marina, Normandy Beach Improvement Association, St. Francis Community Center, Surf City Yacht Club, Trader's Cove and Green Street Park in Tuckerton. The Normandy Beach upweller is the newest upweller and began operating at that location in 2024.

In May, RCTB put a new upweller into service at our site in Traders Cove Marina & Park. This design maximizes the surface area of silos, thereby increasing stocking density and water flow rates, translating to faster shellfish growth.

Hard Clams - The Bureau of Marine Habitat & Shellfisheries in the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Fish and Wildlife, Marine Resources Administration purchased approximately 560,000 hard clams to be raised in the RCTB upwellers. In addition, RCTB overwintered approximately 150,000 clams from the 2023 growing season. These clams had a survival rate of approximately 90% over the 2023-2024 winter. They were distributed to our network of upwellers in the Spring to resume the grow out phase.

On October 30, 2024, RCTB planted approximately 360,200 in areas designated by the Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries. There were 267,200 2024 clams and 93,000 2023 clams. A total of 70,600 clams from the 2024 crop will be overwintered at our Beach Haven site.



Shellfish Acquired - In 2024, RCTB purchased 20,000 2mm oysters and 12 million eyed oyster larvae from the NJ Aquaculture Innovation Center (AIC). Late in the season RCTB received approximately 4,000 juvenile bay scallops from the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory.

Oysters - The 20,000 diploid oysters were distributed among 12 upwellers for growout. The final count for the season was approximately 17,000, a loss of 15%. These oysters were bagged and deployed to the living shoreline at Mordecai Island.

Eyed Oyster Larvae - RCTB purchased eyed oyster larvae to fulfill oyster spat on shell work at Mystic Beach in Little Egg Harbor Township and the living shoreline at Mordecai Island off Beach Haven. RCTB conducted an additional spat set to support the efforts of one of the shellfish growers participating in the Ocean County Soil District COASTAL Project. A total of 1.6 million juvenile oysters were added to the Bay.

IN THE BAY

RCTB has had an ongoing relationship with the Mordecai Land Trust for more than a decade supporting the effort to preserve and restore Mordecai Island. Mordecai Island is a 45 acre, uninhabited coastal marsh island in Barnegat Bay, NJ. The island has experienced accelerated erosion and has lost approximately 26 acres (37%) since 1930, which is due to a realignment of the New Jersey Intracoastal Waterway by the Army Corps of Engineers, storms, boat wakes, and sea level rise.

RCTB has successfully placed 13,000 bags of shell to protect the southwestern side of Mordecai Island from further erosion.

COASTAL Project

RCTB has joined with the Ocean County Soil District (OCSD) and a diverse group of partners in the NJ COASTAL Aquaculture Project (Conservation Opportunities Advancing Sustainable Technologies for Aquaculture Leases). The COASTAL project was awarded \$961,227 funding for a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) project from the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. Project partners will provide technical assistance and an additional \$961,227 in match through cash and in-kind contributions. Partners include: NJDEP Bureau of Shellfisheries, NJ Department of Agriculture, Long Beach Township, the Barnegat Bay Partnership, ReClam the Bay, Cape Atlantic Conservation District, Stockton University, Parsons Mariculture, Forty North Oyster Farms/Barnegat Oyster Collective, the Jetty Rock Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the Nature Conservancy (NJ Chapter) and the New Jersey Aquaculture Association. RCTB pledged a total amount of \$118,500 in in-kind services over five years and has fulfilled over 75% of that pledge in the first two reporting periods.

Little Egg Harbor Spat on Shell Projects

In July 2023 RCTB was awarded two separate contracts by Little Egg Harbor Township to design and construct Spat-on-Shell projects as part of restoration activities at the Parkertown and Mystic Beaches. Due to severe erosion, Little Egg Harbor Township adopted projects to restore these public beach areas to the 1977 shoreline,

slow wave action, improve habitats and protect uplands. RCTB's role was to add 600 bags of oyster spat on shell and 600 bags of cultch material to the breakwater structures at these sites. The Parkertown project was completed in 2023; Mystic Beach was completed in 2024.

The Mystic Beach project required 400 bags of cultch material to be placed on the bayside of four breakwaters (100 bags on each structure) put in place to protect the replenished beach and limit further erosion. The cultch material is designed to attract oyster larvae naturally occurring in the water column. Additionally, 100 bags of spat on shell were planted on the beachside of the four breakwaters. Milestones for the project are below:

- On July 1st, RCTB members transported 200 bags of cultch material to the site and deployed 100 bags to two of the breakwater structures, bay side.
- On July 25th, RCTB also deployed 100 spat on shell bags to the land side of the southern breakwater, completing the work on the first breakwater.
- On July 29th, RCTB members transported 200 bags of cultch material to the site and deployed 100 bags to each of the two remaining breakwater structures, bayside.
- On August 15th, 300 spat on shell bags were retrieved from the spat tanks at the RCTB Beach Haven Aquaculture Center and Cattus Island County Park in Toms River and transported to the Mystic Beach site. These spat bags were deployed to the three breakwater structures, completing the requirements of the project. Over 1.1 million oyster spat on shell were added to the Mystic Beach restoration efforts.



Over the past two years, RCTB has added more than 3.6 million oysters to living shoreline projects in the Bay.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Shellfish in the Classroom

The Shellfish in the Classroom program expanded significantly in 2024. We reached 1,300 students in 12 schools throughout the state, as far north as Edison, NJ and as far west as Cranbury, NJ. This represents a 50% increase over 2023. Younger students learned about the ecological benefits of shellfish in our bays, including health, resiliency, habitat creation, and shoreline stabilization. Older students were also introduced to scientific equipment used in assessing some environmental conditions and were able to grow oysters in their classroom with equipment supplied by RCTB.

Internships and Scholarships

In 2021, friends and family of former RCTB Vice President, Lou Fellner, lead by Lou's close friend Joe Kobylarz, established the Lou Fellner Memorial Scholarship Fund in his memory. Thus began RCTB's formal scholarship assistance program for students pursuing an education in marine and/or environmental sciences. This initiative is administered through the Save Barnegat Bay Student Grant program. In 2024, RCTB sponsored a research project by Nicholas Guerriero entitled *Assessing Copper and Zinc Content in Mercenaria Mercenaria*. RCTB continues to expand scholarship and internship opportunities, supporting three students in 2024.

Community Events

Community events offer RCTB volunteers the opportunity to reach out to the public, provide some education, raise funds and sell RCTB merchandise. Some of the venues where RCTB participated include the Artisan Market in Beach Haven, the Beach Plum Festival, the Surf City Farmers Market, Lavallette Founders Day, the New Jersey Maritime Museum, the Surf City Bay Beach, the Barnegat Bay Gunning and Decoy Show, Beach Haven Chowder Cook-Off, and Shellabration. Our members were able to share our message with over 40,000 attendees at these and other events.

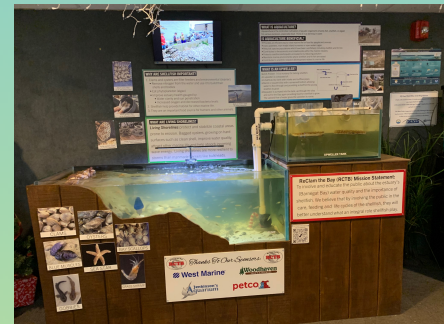
Coastal Stewardship Course

Each year, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Ocean County hosts the Coastal Stewardship course which is a part of the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program (BBSRP) and the long-term collaborations among RCE and ReClam the Bay.

The course is offered under the leadership of Dr. Douglas Zemeckis and provides a fundamental educational experience that more than 600 RCTB volunteers have taken. In 2024, this ten-week course covered topics including Marine Ecology, Shellfish Biology and Aquaculture, Water Quality Monitoring and Shell Recycling, Shellfish and Seagrass Restoration, Habitat Restoration and Living Shorelines, and Climate Change and Coastal Resiliency. A total of 124 students registered for the 2024 Coastal Stewardship course, including 80 new students and 44 graduates who returned for continuing education. The Coastal Stewardship course will continue to be offered annually to provide the educational foundation that helps to empower many RCTB members to get involved with shellfish and environmental issues related to Barnegat Bay and beyond.

RCTB and Jenkinson's Aquarium

RCTB continues to expand our collaboration with the Jenkinson's Aquarium in Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey, providing additional upweller training for Jenkinson's staff. A number of Jenkinson's staff participated in the installation of the new Traders Cove upweller and joined the local upweller maintenance crews.



The Clam Trail

The Clam Trail is a public arts and awareness project that involves more than 30 decorated clams, standing over five feet tall, located throughout Ocean County. It is a year round eco-learning activity. Each clam has a plaque bearing an ecological fact which is used as part of a 'treasure hunt' to find the clam and record the fact. RCTB re-energized The Clam Trail by including a QR code registration system to track visitors. This improved efficiency of registration and turnaround for those who complete the Clam Trail. Last year, RCTB instituted an advertising campaign using the Clam trail to promote local businesses that support our efforts.

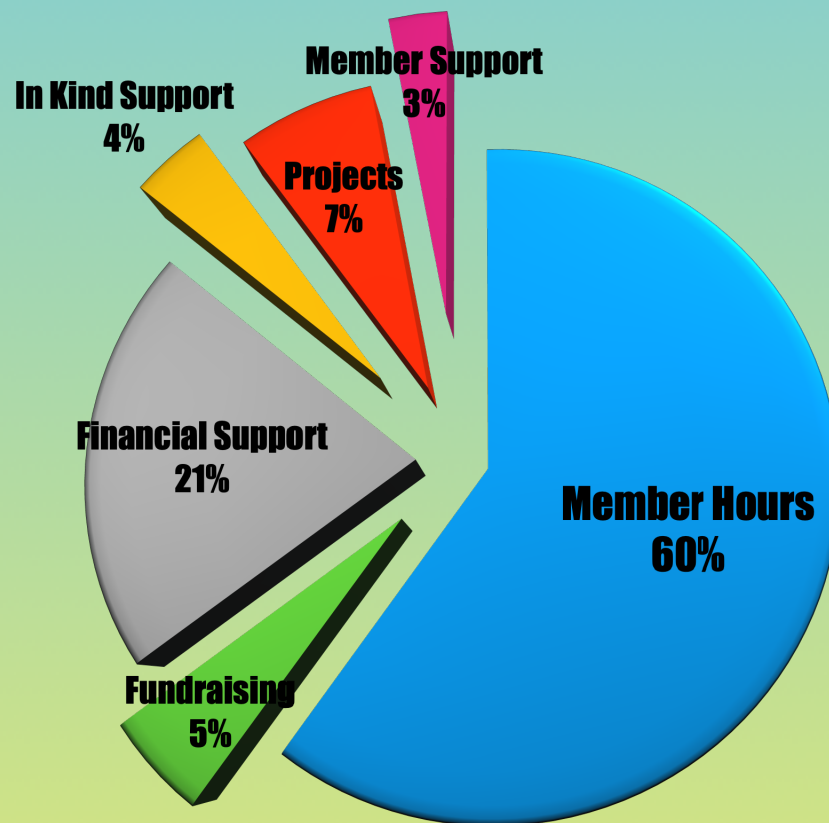
Special thanks to Natalia Henriques-Costa and Manuel Costa, Jr., owners of Henriques Yachts in Bayville. They step out of their custom boat building shoes to mold giant clams for the Clam Trail. Their generous contributions help RCTB continue our critical mission of education, outreach and restoration of the shellfish population.



INVESTMENT IN THE BARNEGAT BAY ESTUARY

RCTB's investment in the Bay is derived from a variety of sources. Membership Volunteer Hours (60%) continues to be the largest portion of our investment in the Bay. Individual contributions, financial support from foundations and membership financial support represents 30%. Revenues from Projects and In-Kind services represent 10%.

2024 Investment in the Bay - \$555,100



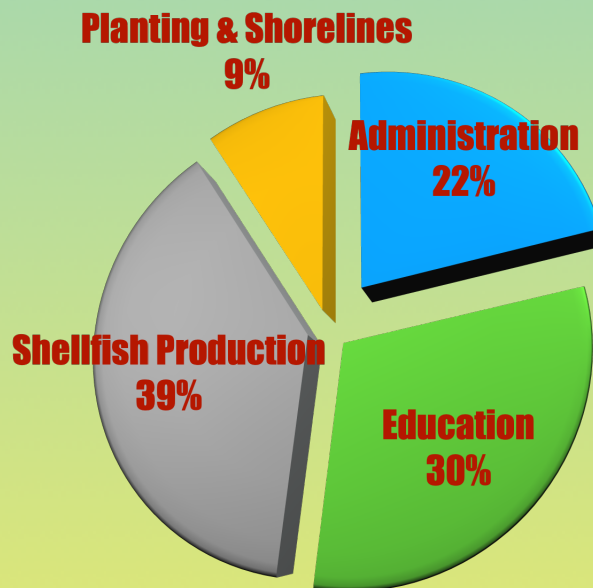
The result is an investment of \$555,100 in the future of the Barnegat Bay Estuary, our largest annual impact to date and a 22% increase over 2023.

OUR MEMBERS

Since our inception in 2005, ReClam The Bay (RCTB) has been an all-volunteer “army.” These stewards of the bay are the core of our operation. They serve as upweller captains, participate in construction, education, community events, project management, growing shellfish and maintaining our upweller fleet, merchandising, back office functions, and handling the many little things that come up while raising millions of shellfish, and reaching an estimated 40,000 people last year.

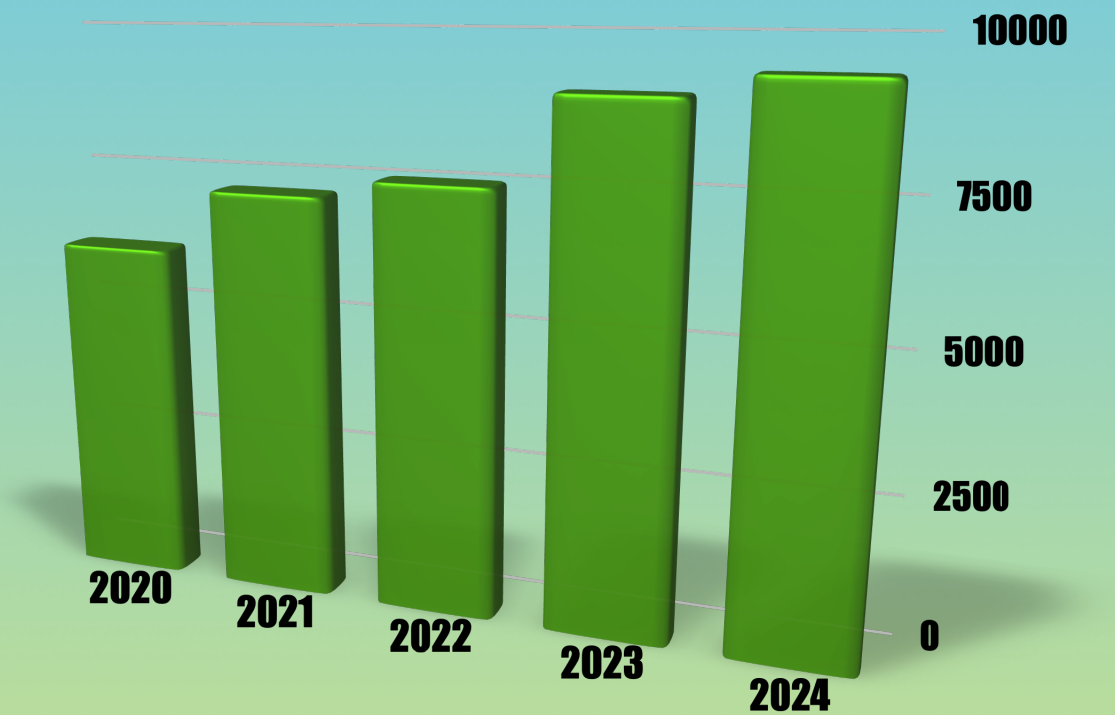
Many members are graduates of the Coastal Stewardship Course offered by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program (BBSRP), where they receive training about shellfish aquaculture, oyster reef restoration, maintaining and improving water quality in the watersheds and bays, and instruction on how to grow shellfish. Since our inception in 2005, RCTB members and volunteers have put approximately 32 million clams, oysters, bay scallops, surf clams and oyster spat on shell in Barnegat Bay.

Member Commitment - 9,410 hours



RCTB members provided over 9,400 hours of dedicated service in 2024, exceeding last year's effort by 4%.

Member Support in Hours



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

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 more shellfish 4) expand our Shellfish in the Classroom program 5) provide more scholarships and internships for future marine and environmental scientists, and 6) learn more about the bay as a habitat so we can better monitor and improve conditions.

It's all about preserving the coastal way of life and leaving our bays in a better condition for generations to come.

THANK YOU

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

In 2024, RCTB received significant financial support from the Davis Smith Family Foundation, the Sea Shell Resort Striped Bass Fishing Derby, the Bill & Ginger Winder Family Foundation and a host of other donors who contributed. We are grateful and humbled by your investment in us. We are working hard to gain and maintain your trust and support.

JOIN US

BECOME A MEMBER

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/sustaining-membership

DONATE

As an all-volunteer non-profit 501c3 organization, we rely on the generosity of individuals, businesses and foundations 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 estuary 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.

You can support our work today at reclamthebay.org/donate

2024 ReClam The Bay Officers and Board Members

Rick Bushnell, Chairman
Bill Walsh, President
Max Lopp, Vice President
Cheryl McCurry, Secretary
Ed Pietrowicz, Treasurer
Heather Butera
Jack Duggan
Al Fasano
Deb Licato-Meiman
John Meiman
Fran Sanchez
Teresa Simon
Frank Vives

Staff

Kelly Jurgensen