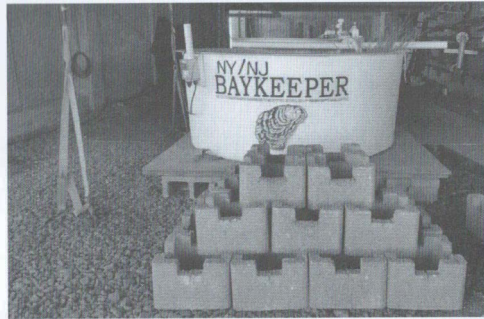


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*Oyster castles provide a hard surface where oysters can attach.*

## NY/NJ Baykeeper's oyster reef naturally reproduces baby oysters in Raritan Bay

By Debbie Mans, Former Executive Director & Baykeeper, NY/NJ Baykeeper, current NJDEP Deputy Commissioner

**N**Y/NJ Baykeeper's Restoration Program scientists discovered the natural growth of baby oysters, biologically known as spat, while monitoring the oyster restoration site at Naval Weapons Station Earle in Raritan Bay this past fall. Natural recruitment has been observed at the site for the first time, which means that the adult oysters on the reef are spawning and the larvae are settling back on the reef. This

The NY-NJ Harbor Estuary was once home to millions of acres of oyster beds. However, due to rampant development, overharvesting and pollution, the metro-area oyster is now functionally extinct. NY/NJ Baykeeper has been working to restore the oyster population for the benefits they provide the surrounding communities, which include cleaner water, increased habitat, and shoreline stability.

"From a biological perspective, this initial discovery of spat is fantastic news, signifying the health of our oyster reef and Raritan Bay," said Meredith Comi, Restoration Program Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper. "With our continued urban shoreline habitat restoration efforts, we expect to see additional recruitment and reproduction. As a bi-state restoration leader, we are thankful for the Navy's unique assistance in providing a continued commitment to a safer and cleaner NY-NJ Harbor."

NY/NJ Baykeeper and partners installed a first of its kind urban living shoreline last year at Naval Weapons Station Earle in

Monmouth County. The 0.9-acre living shoreline consists of an artificial reef using live oysters and concrete structures, known as oyster castles, which provide the necessary hard surface on which oysters can attach and grow. The project is working to protect the Navy's critical infrastructure, as well surrounding communities, against future storm surges.

"After Hurricane Sandy, it became critical to address shoreline erosion and improve coastal resiliency. The project will provide important data to determine how a living shoreline can fortify the nearby shoreline, improve water quality, and create aquatic habitat in our urban watershed and, hopefully, replicate this technique elsewhere in the estuary.

For more information on the program, please visit [www.njnybaykeeper.org](http://www.njnybaykeeper.org) and follow us @NYNJBaykeeper. Baykeeper may be reached at 732-888-9870.



*Oysters spat*

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