



# Info

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For immediate release: April 23, 2013  
Contact: Kathy FitzPatrick, PE, 288-5429

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## Release

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### Martin County begins 4-acre Oyster Reef Restoration Project in St. Lucie Estuary

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Stuart, Fla. - Martin County launched the Oyster Reef Restoration Program in 2005 in response to declining oyster populations in the St. Lucie estuary. Since that time, more than 30 acres of oyster habitat has been constructed with the goal of improving the water quality of the river. This week, Martin County began a new project that will add to the estuary's oyster population in a 4-acre area near the shoreline west of Krueger Creek on the south side of the St. Lucie River, near downtown Stuart. "Monitoring efforts have provided data on the early success of our program at providing productive habitat for oyster and other estuarine species," said Kathy FitzPatrick, Martin County Coastal Engineer. "This 4-acre project will allow us to build upon this success and continue water quality improvements in the St. Lucie Estuary."

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Oyster habitat is critical to the health of estuaries, effectively filtering nutrients, fine sediments and toxins from the water. Just one adult oyster can filter between 20 and

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50 gallons of water per day. Oyster reefs also provide essential habitat structure for other species including shrimp, clams, crabs, snails and many species of fish. Truckloads of shells and other materials used to build oyster beds are being delivered to the Britt Point staging area, located just north of the old Roosevelt Bridge. The contractor, McCulley Marine, will transport the material on a barge to the deployment site. The project is expected to take three weeks to complete.

This project was made possible through grant funding from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the South Florida Water Management District, who equally funded the project with a grant of more than \$200,000 each. This grant includes a five-year monitoring program where oyster recruitment and water quality will be analyzed. For more information about oyster restoration, visit [www.oysterrestoration.com](http://www.oysterrestoration.com).

#### About Oyster Reef Restoration

In 2009, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) awarded Martin County more than \$4 million in federal funding for the Oyster Reef Restoration Project as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The project restored important oyster habitat in the St. Lucie and Loxahatchee Estuaries, leading to long-term and significant ecological improvements to the health of the river as well as providing additional recreational and economic benefits to the community. Oyster habitat is crucial to the health of our estuaries, effectively filtering nutrients, fine sediments and toxins from the water. Just one adult oyster can filter between 20 and 50 gallons of water per day. The newly constructed reef habitat, when fully populated with oysters, could filter an amount equal to the total volume of the St Lucie Estuary in about a month.

Oyster reefs also provide essential habitat structure for many other forms of marine life including shrimp, clams, crabs, snails and a variety of recreationally important fish such as gag grouper, gray snapper, redfish, and sheepshead.

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# Martin County

Project Name: G:\projects\GIS\_Projects\coastal\Oyster  
Created By: Baret Barry (ENG Dept)  
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# St. Lucie Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration



-  Restoration Area
-  Restored Oyster Reefs - 2010
-  Historic Oyster Reef

