

Oyster restoration is a lot more than a shell game

Several weeks ago, I participated in my first oyster roundup at the 64th Street boat ramp. Along with many adults, dozens of children showed up with oysters they had farmed over the last year to plant their harvest and pick up new oysters for growing in the coming year.

As is typical with oyster farming, as well as reef establishment, some of the oysters fared better than others. Still, we loaded bushels of oysters, and the children went out on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's boat to plant their harvest.

New to the oyster restoration effort, I asked a seasoned volunteer if he thought the seemingly large number of oysters would make a significant impact. He said that millions of live oysters and tons of oyster shell are needed from children, adults, businesses and municipalities if the Lynnhaven restoration is to be successful.

I have served on the oyster restoration committee for Lynnhaven River 2007, and I've seen the wonderful effect of hundreds of people, upset by the state of the watershed, channeling their frustration into increasingly bold moves to limit pollution and restore the native oyster.

Your article "The oyster shell game" (front page, Sept. 28) did little to encourage residents to join the effort at a time when community involvement is pivotal to the survival of the Lynnhaven.

In coming months, waterfront landowners on both private and public lands on the Lynnhaven will be asked to play a major role in shifting the tide of pollution.

Projects like Save our Shell (SOS) and Living Shoreline are showing great prospects for improving water quality, and despite the fact that many oysters on reefs in the Lynnhaven are not reaching market size, the resilience and survival

of smaller oysters is helping the restoration effort tremendously.

Decades of pollution and indifference have made oyster restoration a slow process, but a plan is in place to bring life back to the Lynnhaven. The *Virginian-Pilot* has an obligation to cover what will become one of the great comeback stories in the Chesapeake Bay.

The Save our Shell program will collect oyster shells from restaurants to form the base of many new reefs. Residents will be encouraged to use their frontage on the Lynnhaven for the creation of living shorelines.

If the promising aspects of Lynnhaven River restoration programs receive the media attention they deserve and residents take an active role, then the shift toward a healthier waterway will surely be cause for celebration in 2007.

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