
2023

IMPACT REPORT



Prepared by:

**Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program's
Back to the Bays Initiative**

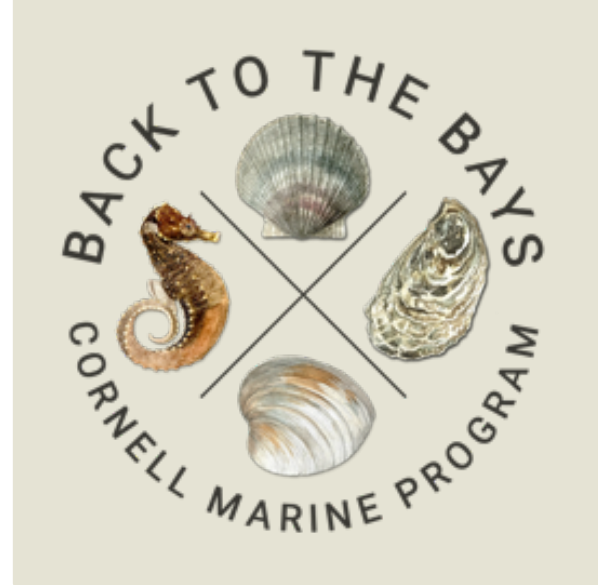


OUR VISION

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County's Marine Program has been "giving back to the bays" since 1985. As regional leaders in all aspects of coastal and marine research and restoration methodology, we have been able to make significant progress in enhancing the health of our local waterways. Through the Back to the Bays Initiative, we work on the community level with local supporters and stewards to provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in this important work.

OUR MISSION

Engage local communities in vital efforts to improve water quality, habitat, and shellfish populations on Long Island through involvement and giving opportunities.



1.

Create pathways to stewardship through hands-on involvement opportunities.

2.

Establish a network of long-term receiving areas for habitat and shellfish restoration work via our Back to the Bays Stewardship Sites.

3.

Enhance and restore our bays through community education, stewardship and restoration.

OUR IMPACT

5 Stewardship Sites created and maintained with more restoration sites planned for 2024



5 million clams grown and seeded to support population enhancement efforts



513 volunteers participated in our 35 Stewardship Sessions



200 cubic feet of recycled shell material transformed into spat-on-shell oyster reefs



\$630,000 secured in grant funds and private donations to support the Back to the Bays Initiative



1,619 community members were reached through our 27 Education + Outreach events





BACK THE BAYS STEWARDSHIP SITE NETWORK



Production + Education Facilities



Strong's Yacht Center FLUPSY Annex
SCMELC Shellfish Hatchery
Shelter Island Annex
Tiana Bayside Facility

Back to the Bays Stewardship Sites



Mattituck
Shelter Island
Sag Harbor
Hampton Bays
Montauk

Our North Fork operations are based out of the Suffolk County Marine Environmental Learning Center in Southold, and our South Fork operations are headquartered at the Tiana Bayside Facility in Hampton Bays. Strong's Yacht Center in Mattituck hosts our floating shellfish nursery grow out system, and we also operate a nursery system on Shelter Island. Working with local regulatory agencies, municipalities, and private property owners, we have been able to establish and maintain numerous "Back to the Bays Stewardship Sites" designed to be long-term receiving areas of our shellfish seeding, eelgrass planting, and coastal resiliency efforts.

FEATURED STEWARDSHIP SITE: SAG HARBOR

With the advocacy and backing of the local community and key partners, we were able to establish a new Stewardship Site in Sag Harbor! The funds that were raised sponsored an eelgrass planting at our Sag Harbor Shoals restoration site in Fall 2023, and will support the planning, permitting, and pilot deployments of a new spat-on-shell oyster reef in the waters off Sag Harbor in 2024.



Havens Beach

Marine Meadows Workshop:

On a rainy Saturday October morning, community members rolled out by the dozens to help in our effort to restore eelgrass in the surrounding waters. More eelgrass restoration is in store for 2024!

Kidd Squid Brewing Co.
Brew for the Bay



➤➤➤ READ MORE

A special 'Brew for the Bay' was produced to support the Sag Harbor Back to the Bays Stewardship Site.



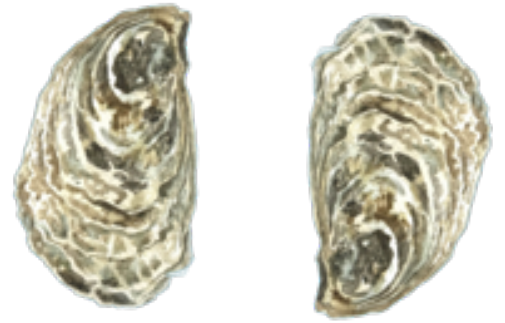
READ MORE <<<<

We are working with Sag Harbor Village, Southampton Town and the NYSDEC on establishing our new reef site! Be sure to check our website for updates in 2024.



Sag Harbor Stewardship
Site Campaign

STEWARDSHIP: OYSTERS



One of the most significant efforts we have underway at our Stewardship Sites is the restoration of oyster reefs. In conjunction with our Shell Recycling Program, valuable material is collected and used to produce spat-on-shell oyster reefs, playing an important role in water quality improvement, oyster population enhancement, and providing essential underwater habitat for a variety of marine life.

Shell Recycling



Oyster Larvae



Remote Setting



Deployment + Grow Out



Monitoring



STEWARDSHIP: OYSTERS

Featured Project: Coecles Harbor, Shelter Island

Thanks to the support of a Water Quality Improvement Grant made through the Town of Shelter Island Community Preservation Fund, a new spat-on-shell oyster reef has been established in Coecles Harbor.



We are grateful for the many community and student volunteers who participated in our Stewardship Sessions: from bagging recycled shells in May, through the final reef deployment of 2023 in November.

Oyster reef deployments were also conducted this field season at our Stewardship Sites in Shinnecock Bay and Lake Montauk.



STEWARDSHIP: CLAMS

Featured Project: Strong's FLUPSY Annex, Mattituck

Our "floating upweller system" (FLUPSY) is a critical aspect of our shellfish production, offering a protected nursery setting with optimized growing conditions that supplies hard clams for population enhancement at our Stewardship Sites.



Thanks to our FLUPSY host, Strong's Yacht Center, we are able to offer special opportunities to our Stewards in the care and seeding of our hard clams.

Back to the Bays clam seedings were conducted this field season at our Stewardship Sites in Shinnecock Bay and Shelter Island.

STEWARDSHIP: COASTAL PLANTS

Our Habitat Restoration efforts entail working with coastal plant species including marsh grass propagated in our greenhouse, and beachgrass grown out in our Coastal Plant Nursery at the Tiana Bayside Facility. This year we continued our coastal resiliency plantings at Long Beach, conducted several public workshops propagating marsh grass, and worked with local schools for classroom grow out and expansion of our work.



1. Marsh grass seed collection along Dune Road, Hampton Bays.

2. Marsh grass propagation and grow out for future restoration plantings during spring workshops.

3. Planting marsh grass and native shrubs for erosion control at Long Beach, Sag Harbor.

STEWARDSHIP: EELGRASS



From providing essential habitat for shellfish and finfish, to improving coastal resiliency and absorbing excess nutrients from the water, eelgrass meadows are of vital importance to our bays. CCE has been working to restore eelgrass populations for the past 25 years, and the sites currently supported through the Back to the Bays initiative are thriving. Every year we work to expand our existing efforts while we determine additional areas suitable for restoration of this valuable marine resource.



1. Buoy Deployed Seeding efforts further enhanced the waters off of Tiana Bayside Facility, adding 300,000 eelgrass seeds to the sanctuary in 2023.

2. Our first Marine Meadows Workshop on Shelter Island supported several test plantings conducted in fall 2023, with full scale restoration efforts planned for 2024.

3. We have been planting eelgrass at our Sag Harbor Shoals site for 7 years, and with a renewed focus through the establishment of a Stewardship Site, an additional 3,000 shoots were planted this fall.

STEWARDSHIP: SEAHORSES

We like to think of seahorses as the perfect ambassador species of our eelgrass restoration efforts, as it is their preferred habitat. Northern Lined Seahorses, our native seahorse species, are often found in the eelgrass meadows we work in. Annual seahorse surveys are conducted by our experts to help better understand this incredible species, and are designed to enable our Back to the Bays Stewards to participate in these unique survey outings each summer.



The Seahorse Conservation Initiative, led by scientist and educator Kim Manzo, combines habitat and seahorse conservation through public seining events, youth programming, and adult lecture series events.

Seahorse Art + Science “campers” (Tiana Bayside Summer Program) had the experience of a lifetime, seeing and holding a seahorse for the first time in its natural habitat.

Seahorse Conservation Initiative efforts in 2023 resulted in the most sightings per year yet, thanks to the help of volunteers and student interns.



EDUCATION

Education is at the core of everything we do. We work to provide classroom and place-based learning experiences to students, provide integrative STEAM programming through our ArtSEA Initiative, offer Back to the Bays Stewardship Sessions for volunteers, and reach the public through our informative lecture series and other speaking engagements.

Back to the Bays Stewardship Sessions include our lecture series hosted at local breweries, as well as hands-on opportunities to get involved with our work.



ArtSEA Series and Marine Science Summer Programs combine marine education with artistic expression and stewardship.



Over 1,450 students were reached through our East End Education Programs via field trips, student job shadowing, mentorships and outreach programs.



INTERNSHIPS

We had the pleasure of welcoming six undergraduate Back to the Bays Interns for the summer 2023 season. In a symbiosis of sorts, our interns kept things running smoothly, allowing us to accomplish more than we could have without them, while they gained valuable knowledge and skills to support their environmental career goals.

Meet the 2023 Back to the Bays Interns!



Intern Testimonials:

“As an Ecosystem Science and Policy major, my college education focuses on overarching environmental processes, anthropogenic effects, law, and mostly terrestrial ecosystems. Through the Back to the Bays Internship program, I learned more about marine environments and habitats and came to understand the ecosystem surrounding the place I grew up. I feel as though the lab and fieldwork have filled a gap in my education, as I am more confident in my knowledge of and ability to handle marine species. And through the many community outreach programs, I felt I was able to spread the word on promoting environmental and marine protection. Working with passionate kids in both the summer camps and ArtSea programs made me hopeful for a future of well-educated environmentalists and marine biologists.” - Jackie Glaser



“In my career, I want to use education as a tool to protect local marine habitats. This summer I learned it's so important to involve everyone in the community in that education, not just students! Protecting our marine systems requires not only important research, but also communication and outreach. I am so glad this experience has taught me to look at environmental problems with holistic solutions.” - Lane Dominy



COLLABORATIONS

Our collaborations are a key aspect of the Back to the Bays Initiative. We thank our community partners and the local businesses who gave back to the bays this year! Here is a look at some of our 2023 collaborations.

1



Shell Recycling Program

Our network of shell recyclers continues to grow thanks to the wonderful restaurant partners we are working with.

2



Borghese Rosé for the Bays

The 5th consecutive vintage of Rosé for the Bays was produced by Borghese Vineyard to benefit Back to the Bays.

3



ManaMade

These special locally made pieces cast from actual marine specimens continue to support our work, and were showcased in the Fall Fashion Issue of Hamptons Magazine.

4

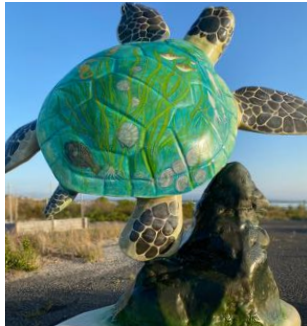


Kidd Squid Brew for the Bay

In order to help support efforts to officially establish a Sag Harbor Back to the Bays Stewardship Site, a special 'brew for the bay' was produced utilizing all NY grown grain and hops.

COLLABORATIONS

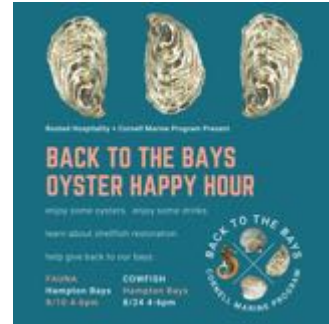
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Tiana Turtle

We partnered with NY Marine Rescue Center to help create awareness of sea turtles and their habitat at Tiana Bayside.

6



Oyster Happy Hours

Our Shell Recycling Program partners hosted a series of happy hours to highlight our oyster reef restoration efforts.

7



Menu Item Give Backs

Some of our restaurant partners chose to create special shellfish menu items, proceeds from which are donated to Back to the Bays.

8



Scott Bluedorn Featured Artist

Scott created the beautiful species artwork featured on our outreach materials this year.

Learn more about these, and some of our additional 2023 collaborations, in our latest *On the Water + In the Field* video segment.





PUBLIC OUTREACH

We strive to reach as many individuals as possible each year. Through our web-based platforms and in-person engagements, we are able to help inform the public about issues facing our waters and the inspiring work being conducted to help our local environment.

Ways to Give Back to the Bays Campaign

We continued to present our annual lineup of opportunities to LEARN, DO, ENJOY, and GIVE BACK in support of our bays through our newly redesigned website, allowing us to become an even better resource for our stewards, partners and supporters.

New Website By the Numbers

In 2023, BacktotheBays.org was accessed by:

- Nearly 6,000 Unique Visitors
- 47 States Including Alaska and Hawaii
- 68 Different Countries such as Australia and Iceland
- Every Continent Represented Except Antarctica



On the Water + In the Field

We produced another special episode of our news magazine show and held a screening party at Sylvester Manor Educational Farm on Shelter Island.



Tiana Bayside Signage

All weather educational signage was developed by the Back to the Bays Team with support from Southampton Town, creating a self-guided tour experience of the beautiful grounds of Tiana Bayside Facility in Hampton Bays.

2024 OUTLOOK

The Back to the Bays Initiative will continue to expand in 2024, with a lot more stewardship opportunities, collaborations, and community programming to be enjoyed by anyone who wants to help give back to the bays.



On the Horizon for 2024

Menantic Creek and Sag Harbor Cove
Oyster Reef Pilot Plantings

Healthy Bodies + Healthy Bays
Program Relaunch

Expansion of Tiana Bayside Facility
Coastal Plant Nursery and Remote
Oyster Setting Operation

Blue Carbon Campaign Kick Off

Addition of a new Back to the Bays
Stewardship Site in Greenport

We are continually seeking additional funding and partnerships that will enable us to keep restoration activities going at our Back to the Bays Stewardship Sites, and already have several new sites identified that will be officially incorporated into our Back to the Bays Stewardship Site network in the years ahead. We need your help to keep moving forward! Please visit backtothebays.org for sponsorship and underwriting opportunities, details on our Stewardship Site campaigns, information on special events and fundraisers, and enrollment as a Steward in our 2024 Back to the Bays Stewardship Program!



OUR TEAM

The success of Back to the Bays is attributed to the hard work of the following Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program staff who make up the Back to the Bays Initiative Team.



Kimberly Barbour
Back to the Bays
Director



Kim Manzo
Habitat
Coordinator



Kate Rossi-Snook
Aquaculture
Coordinator



Hazel Wodehouse
Volunteer Coordinator
+ Marine Educator



Carolyn Munaco
ArtSEA Educator +
Outreach Assistant



Ella Gatfield
Back to the Bays
Educator

SPECIAL THANKS

The Back to the Bays Initiative relies on the support and involvement of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County Executive Director Vanessa Lockel, Marine Program Director Chris Pickerell, Associate Marine Program Director Lorne Brousseau, and the many members of the CCE Marine Program team who play a role in our efforts annually.

Media Support:

Rory MacNish



Administrative Support:

Darci Bielenda



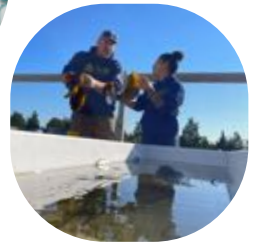
Aquaculture Program Support:

Gregg Rivara

Harrison Tobi

Kim Tetrault

Mike Patricio



Summer Habitat Interns:

Anna Meichenbaum

Madilyn Sausville



Habitat Team:

Steve Schott

Jason Havelin



Shellfish Hatchery Support:

Josh Perry

Danielle Morris

Bart Birk

Jesse Hopkins



SPECIAL THANKS

The Back to the Bays Initiative is a community based and supported effort. We rely on our network of donors, supporters, collaborators, and volunteers to operate successfully and would like to thank the following individuals and entities for their contributions in 2023.

Ali Pratt
 Amy Halsey
 Andrea Greeven
 Anker
 Ashley Howe
 Borghese Vineyard
 Bridget Rymer
 Briony Raymond
 Bruce Kieloch
 Candace Pugatch
 Catherine McKenzie
 Clamity Janes
 Courtney Benediktsson
 Cornell Oysters
 Cowfish
 Danielle Morris
 David Brown
 David Zwirner
 Dean Crowell
 Donovan Bauman
 East End Financial Group
 East Hampton Town Council + Supervisor
 Elizabeth Corker
 Emily Efration
 Express Magazine
 Fauna
 Fiona Farrell
 First And South
 Fitzhugh Carol
 Frank Platt
 Giovanni Borghese
 Grainne Coen
 Greenport BID
 Greenport Harbor Brewing Co.
 Gwen Paulsen
 Hamptons Magazine
 Happy Oyster Co.
 Howard Mittman
 Howard Sachs
 Jackie Glaser
 Jacqueline Fenlon

Jane Husband
 Jeff Strong
 Jennifer Birn
 Joanna Ziegler
 John Bouvier
 Jonathan Norman
 Josh Fromson
 Josh Moskowitz
 Kaia Madigan
 Kathleen Walas
 Katie Hill
 Kelsey Cheslock
 Kessie Boutique
 Kevin Crow
 Kidd Squid Brewing Co.
 Kim Shaw
 Kristen Doulos
 Kristin Chasky
 LW Birken
 Lane Dominy
 Lily Waldhauer
 Lindsay Bangel
 Lisa Gioia
 Little Creek Oysters
 Little Ram Oysters
 ManaMade Jewelry
 Marit Molin
 Marla Farrell
 Matt Petersen
 Mark Ruffalo
 Maxine Bedat
 Melissa Baer
 Michael G. Tekel
 Michelle Schiano
 Monica Zwirner
 NYSDEC
 Nemschink Silverman Architects
 Nick Pyle
 North Fork Brewing Co.
 Northforker
 Oysterponds Shellfish Co.

Peconic Gold Oysters
 Peconic Land Trust
 Peeko Oyster Co.
 Peter Colon
 Peter Lattman
 Rachel Hersh
 Randolph Gunzer
 Richard Perry
 Robert Scheetz
 Robins Island Foundation
 Ron Paulsen
 Rooted Hospitality Group
 Rumba
 Sag Harbor Village Mayor + Board of Trustees
 Salt Restaurant
 Salt + Sea
 Saunders Associates
 Scott Bluedorn
 Sen Restaurant
 Shawn Sachs
 Shelter Island Town Supervisor + Town Council
 Shelter Island Town Water Quality Improvement Advisory Board
 Shelter Island Yacht Club
 Silver Sands Motel
 Sophie Clark
 South Shore Estuary Reserve
 Southampton Town Supervisor + Town Council
 Southampton Town Trustees
 Southampton Town Office of Community Preservation
 Strong's Marine
 Sudhir Venkatesh
 Susan, Dennis, and Elizabeth Ruocco
 Sylvester Manor
 Tamie Thomas
 The Chequit
 The Raynor Group
 Tides Near Me
 Tom Sarakatsannis
 Vivian Arias
 Westhampton Beach Brewing Co.
 Yennicott Oysters



STAY IN TOUCH & GET INVOLVED



EMAIL
ccemarine@cornell.edu



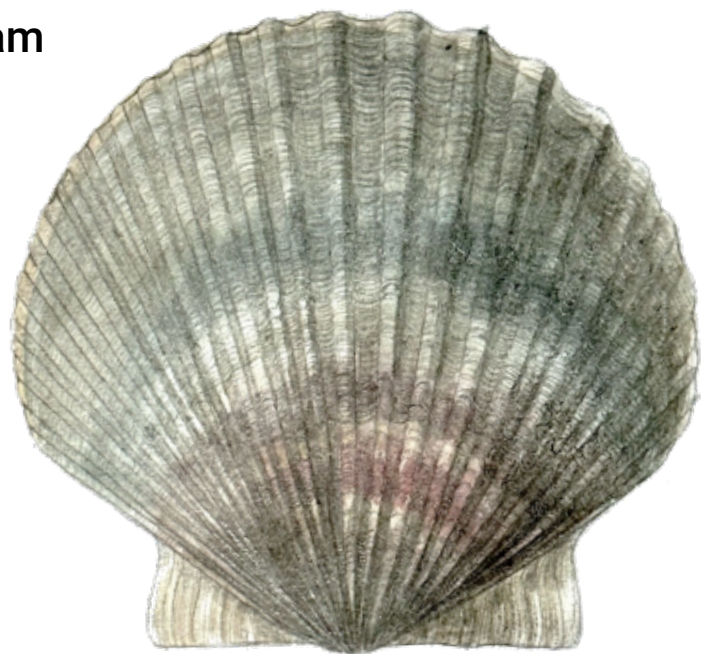
WEBSITE
www.backtothebays.org



INSTAGRAM
[@ccemarineprogram](https://www.instagram.com/ccemarineprogram) #backtothebays



FACEBOOK
[@ccemarineprogram](https://www.facebook.com/ccemarineprogram)





ABOUT US

Back to the Bays is an initiative of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County’s Marine Program. It was founded in 2015 with the goal of engaging the public in the many science based efforts underway by CCE Marine Program to improve and preserve our coastal and marine ecosystems. By creating unique hands-on opportunities to get involved with aquaculture and habitat restoration, we are able to inspire our communities to care about the health of our local waters and shorelines, while empowering them to effect real positive change. Through our annual “Ways to Give Back to the Bays” outreach campaign, monthly Back to the Bays Stewardship Sessions, special events and fundraising collaborations we are able to reach thousands of people each year. Our network of Stewardship Sites, Businesses Who Give Back to the Bays, school and non-profit partnerships, and donors continue to grow each year enabling us to make real progress in restoring marine and coastal habitat, create shellfish sanctuaries and oyster reefs, and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards!

