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In Louisiana, we eat a lot of oysters. What happens to all the shell?

Legislature passes resolution that asks for LDWF study to find out

The Louisiana Legislature has unanimously passed a resolution, [HCR26](#), sponsored by [Rep. Jean-Paul Coussan](#) of Lafayette, that calls for a study of the final destination of oyster shell removed from Louisiana waters. [The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) enthusiastically supports the resolution, because oyster shell is a valuable natural resource that can be used to build oyster reefs, which help to slow erosion, minimize storm surge and provide numerous other benefits in a state that has seen about 2,000 square miles of coastal wetlands vanish.

“This study will be important in informing our work at CRCL to recycle oyster shell, as much as possible, to help us restore our coast,” said CRCL Policy Director Emily Vuxton. “We thank Representative Coussan for his hard work in carrying this important legislation.”

Louisiana is the No. 1 oyster-producing state in the nation, and more than 1 million oysters from the state’s waters are consumed per day. The oyster industry often returns shell to the water or uses it for other purposes. But because the oysters are consumed in areas far away from where they are harvested, shells are sometimes simply discarded, instead of being used to make oyster reefs that provide habitat for new oysters and other wildlife, slow coastal erosion and help minimize storm surge during tropical weather. This resolution would help figure out how much shell is used in coastal restoration, how much is squandered and how much is used for other purposes.

“Oyster shell is one of the building blocks of our state,” said CRCL Communications Director James Karst. “It should be used to make more Louisiana, not discarded, and this resolution is a step toward ensuring that happens. As we say at CRCL, once you shuck ‘em, don’t just chuck ‘em.”

Through its [Oyster Shell Recycling Program](#), the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana has recycled more than 10 million pounds of shell. Through the program, restaurants collect shell, which is then hauled by a contractor to the organization’s shell pile in Violet. The shell cures in the sun for several months before it is bagged by volunteers. The shell is then deployed back into the water to create oyster reefs. CRCL built its third oyster reef in 2020, and two more reefs are in the planning stages. The shell recycling program was forced to halt operations in the early days of the coronavirus, but in part due to a partnership with the organization [Chef’s Brigade](#), the program has built its way back up and now recycles shell with 12 restaurants.

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[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to drive bold, science-based action to rebuild coastal Louisiana through outreach, restoration and advocacy.