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CRCL builds fifth oyster reef with shell recycled by New Orleans restaurants

Project will help minimize erosion at mound stewarded for centuries by Pointe-au-Chien tribe

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to confronting coastal land loss in Louisiana, has completed the first phase of its fifth oyster reef using shell collected through its Oyster Shell Recycling Program. The reef, constructed in late September and early October with the help of more than 150 volunteers, was built in partnership with the Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribe to protect a rapidly eroding mound complex of cultural importance to the tribe. The second phase of the reef will be completed next year.

This is the second reef CRCL and its volunteers have built with the tribe, whose community in Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes was hit hard by Hurricane Ida in 2021. The oyster reef will help slow erosion as well as create habitat for new oysters and other wildlife, and it will minimize storm surge during hurricanes, protecting the community. Members of the tribe served as boat captains and worked alongside volunteers to build the reef.

“We are grateful for our partnership with the tribe and for our volunteers, restaurant partners, funders and other supporters who worked together to restore our coast with this project,” said Darrah Bach, CRCL’s Oyster Shell Recycling Program coordinator. “Oyster reefs are making a huge impact in limiting coastal land loss, and everyone who was part of this project should take great pride in this work.”

Sponsors of the reef deployment were: Colonial Pipeline Co., Coypu Foundation, EMR Recycling, Henderson Hutter Group, Southeast Aquatic Resources Partnership, Stolthaven Terminals and TC Energy. ORA Estuaries, Marine Research and Ecological Consulting, ConocoPhillips, Meraux Foundation and Ports America were partners on the project.

Volunteers, members of the tribe and CRCL staff returned more than 70 tons of shell to the water in Bayou Pointe-au-Chien, near Montegut. Some of the shell was decorated with environmentally friendly paint through CRCL’s Community Arts Living Shoreline (CALs) project. CRCL has recycled more than 10.5 million pounds of shell through the Oyster Shell Recycling Program since its inception in 2014.

Through the OSRP, restaurants use bins provided by CRCL to collect shell separate from other trash. A contractor, Hendrik Vanderwall, picks up the shell and transports it to CRCL’s Restoration Headquarters in Violet, where the shell cures in the sun for several months before being placed into marine-grade mesh bags by volunteers. The bagged shell is then placed into the water. CRCL monitoring has indicated a 50% reduction in erosion in areas where reefs have been created through the OSRP.

There are 20 restaurant partners in the OSRP, some of them sponsored by Chef’s Brigade. There are also two public drop-off sites for oyster shell in New Orleans. Restaurants interested in joining the program can get information [here](#).

To learn more about the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, visit the organization’s [website](#).

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[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all. Incorporated in 1988, CRCL represents a unique mix of businesses, local governments, industries, scientific communities, national and local conservation groups, hunters, anglers and a broad spectrum of concerned citizens who all share a common vision and commitment to the sustainability of coastal Louisiana.