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New Orleans restaurants urged to save money and coast by recycling oyster shell

Program keeps waste product out of landfills and uses it to slow erosion in south Louisiana

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana is expanding its Oyster Shell Recycling Program by opening up participation to more restaurants in the New Orleans area – and possibly beyond. The program allows restaurants that generate oyster shell to significantly reduce their trash volume and weight, while also creating habitat for new oysters to grow. The program keeps the shell out of landfills and instead uses it to slow coastal erosion in the state that has had more than 2,000 square miles of wetlands vanish in less than a century.

Restaurants participating in the program receive special bins that oyster shuckers and other restaurant staff can deposit shell into. The shell is picked up by a contractor and delivered to CRCL's site in Violet, where it cures in the sun for several months. Volunteers then place the shell into marine-grade mesh bags and built oyster reefs with it at various locations around southeast Louisiana. Oyster reefs are living shorelines and have slowed coastal erosion by up to 50 percent along the coast. Oyster reefs also create habitat for new oysters, as well as fish and wildlife.

Since the program's inception in 2014, CRCL has recycled more than 10 million pounds of shell and built four oyster reefs, partnering with more than 30 restaurants. The Oyster Shell Recycling Program had to pause shell collection in the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic but has been rebuilding capacity. Seventeen restaurants are currently participating in the program, seven of them sponsored by the organization Chef's Brigade.

"We want to see all shell returned to the water," said Darrah Bach, CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program coordinator. "The incentive for restaurants is that they are helping to trim their trash hauling expenses while at the same time supporting the oyster industry and slowing coastal land loss. We know that demonstrating their commitment to the preservation of our state can help set restaurants apart in a competitive marketplace, and we can help them promote their participation."

Restaurants interested in joining the program should email oysters@crcl.org.

CRCL was the first statewide nonprofit dedicated to confronting coastal land loss. The Oyster Shell Recycling Program is supported by businesses and organizations including Henderson Hutter, Shell, Chef's Brigade, TC Energy Foundation, Stolthaven Terminals, Phillips 66 and EMR Metal Recycling. Other sponsors are Meraux Foundation and Two C's. Lowlander Center is also a supporter.

To learn more about the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and the Oyster Shell Recycling Program, 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.