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Lawmakers unanimously pass bill to create oyster shell recycling tax credit *Legislation expected to help more restaurants participate in CRCL's coastal restoration program*

The Louisiana Legislature has passed House Bill 255, which will create a tax credit for restaurants that recycle oyster shells that would otherwise be discarded. The legislation, sponsored by Rep. Mandie Landry of New Orleans, was strongly supported by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, a nonprofit that operates the only large-scale shell recycling program in the state. The bill passed both the House and the Senate unopposed, with Senate approval coming on Sunday night. CRCL expects the bill to be signed into law by Gov. John Bel Edwards.

The bill incentivizes Louisiana restaurants to recycle shell by providing them with a tax credit of \$1 per 50 pounds of shell recycled. It is intended to offset the costs associated with joining shell recycling efforts such as CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program, which has returned more than 13 million pounds of shell to the water since 2014, keeping it out of landfills while using it to slow coastal erosion and create habitat for new oysters to grow. Oyster reefs also help to absorb storm surge during hurricanes and tropical storms.

In addition to support from CRCL, the legislation was supported by the Restore the Mississippi River Delta campaign, the Louisiana Restaurant Association, the Coastal Conservation Association, the Louisiana Hotel and Lodging Association, GNO Inc., New Orleans and Co., Chefs Brigade and the oyster industry.

"The passage of HB255 is a clear indication that the Louisiana Legislature is serious about supporting coastal restoration," said Tyler Bosworth, advocacy director at CRCL. "The five oyster reefs built by CRCL to date have helped significantly reduce the rate of erosion. This bill should make it possible for more restaurants to do the right thing without jeopardizing their bottom line."

More than two dozen restaurants belong to CRCL's Oyster Shell Recycling Program, which is one of the largest such programs in the country. But there is a cost to participate; it pays for a contractor to pick up the shell several times a week from restaurants, then drive it down to CRCL's Restoration Headquarters in St. Bernard Parish. The shell cures for months there, then is packaged into biodegradable mesh bags by volunteers. Then it is strategically placed into the water by volunteers to create oyster reefs that stand between moving water and the soft soil the makes up Louisiana's coast. CRCL has built five reefs so far, with a sixth planned to be built this fall.

Louisiana is the No. 1 oyster-producing state in the nation, and more than one million oysters from the state's waters are consumed each day. The industry often returns spent shell to the water to replenish what is harvested and encourage new growth. However, because many Louisiana oysters are consumed in areas far away from where they are harvested, including at restaurants in urban centers, many shells are simply discarded into mainstream trash. The OSRP seeks to keep this important and valuable natural resource out of landfills and instead use it to restore the state's coast, which has had around 2,000 square miles of wetlands convert into open water since the 1930s.

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[The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](http://www.coalitiontorestorecoastallouisiana.org) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all.