



Oyster Reef Restoration in the Loxahatchee River



Why Restore Oyster Reefs?

Oyster reefs provide important benefits to the overall health of the Loxahatchee River by cleaning water, stabilizing shorelines and providing essential fish habitat. Oyster reefs have declined in the river due to a lack of hard surfaces where oyster larvae can attach.

The Loxahatchee River District and The Nature Conservancy are working in partnership with cooperating agencies and the local community to restore oyster reefs in the river. The newly created reefs will provide habitat and food for fish, crab, shrimp and other important estuarine species.

What We Are Doing

The goal of the project is to create artificial reefs in areas of the river known to have the right conditions for oysters. On the river's northwest fork, ReefBalls™ and bags of recycled oyster shell will be placed under the docks of willing homeowners. Small limestone rocks will be placed along the shoreline in several sections of the southwest fork. These materials will create the foundation for healthy living oyster reefs.



Oyster Reefs

- Filter and clean water
- Stabilize and protect shorelines
- Provide food and habitat for wildlife, including shrimp and crabs
- Serve as hunting grounds for fish species, such as the gray snapper

Measuring Success

Project scientists will closely monitor the restoration project to measure oyster recruitment on the new reefs. Regular surveys will track the number and variety of fish and invertebrate species inhabiting the restored reefs.

Scientists will also assess the value of the new reefs as critical fish habitat. Using ultrasonic transmitters and receivers, fish movements will be tracked to determine the relationship of gray snapper to oyster reefs as a food source.



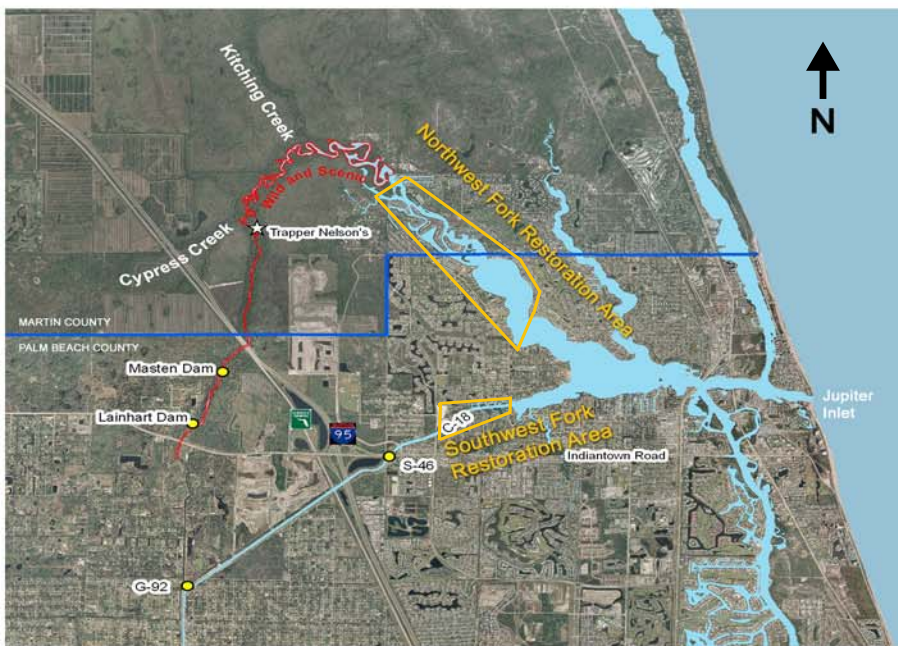
How You Can Help

This is a community-based restoration project and we will only be successful with your help. We are looking for homeowners on the Northwest Fork of the Loxahatchee River to host a reef below their dock. Volunteers are also needed to make ReefBalls™ and fill bags with shells. Please call (561) 744-6668 for more information.



Working Together

- Florida International University
- South Florida Water Management District
- Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative
- Palm Beach County Environmental Resource Management
- Martin County Artificial Reef Program
- The Crab House
- Spotos Oyster Bar
- Friends of the Loxahatchee River, Inc.



For More information:
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The National Partnership between the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program and The Nature Conservancy implements innovative conservation activities that benefit marine, estuarine and riparian habitats across the United States. The NOAA Restoration Center has worked with community organizations to support locally-driven projects that provide strong on-the-ground habitat restoration components that offer educational and social benefits for people and their communities, as well as long-term ecological benefits.

