

# Miami Herald

Posted on Fri, Dec. 13, 2013

## Tons of fossilized oyster shells headed to Md.

By BRIAN WITTE  
Associated Press



Patrick Semansky / AP Photo

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, standing at podium, speaks at a news conference in Baltimore, Friday, Dec. 13, 2013, to unveil the first of several shipments of fossilized oyster shells that are part of a public-private partnership to help rebuild habitat in oyster sanctuaries on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Over the next nine months, over 100,000 tons of shells will be shipped by train from a Florida quarry to Maryland in a partnership with CSX.

The first of several shipments containing more than 100,000 tons of fossilized oyster shells was unveiled Friday as part of a public-private partnership to help rebuild habitat in oyster sanctuaries on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

Gov. Martin O'Malley attended an event at the Port of Baltimore to show the first 2,750 tons. The shells have been shipped from a Florida quarry in a partnership with CSX, which will be transporting 112,500 tons of the fossilized shells by train over the next nine months. The shells are headed to reef restoration initiatives in Harris Creek and the Little Choptank River.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources spent about \$6.3 million to acquire the shells.

"Innovative programs and partnerships like these are making our record investments in restoration,

aquaculture, stewardship and enforcement possible," O'Malley said in a statement.

Maryland does not have natural and affordable shells available to support restoration of the 377-acre Harris Creek sanctuary, so the natural resources department bought the fossilized shells from Gulf Coast Aggregates near Carrabelle, Fla. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation negotiated an agreement with CSX to transport the shells, the department said.

Under the agreement, CSX will transport about 50 train cars of fossilized shells to Curtis Bay every 10 to 14 days between now and September. The shells will then be sent by barge to the Eastern Shore sanctuaries.

The University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and the Oyster Recovery Partnership will produce young oysters and put them on the new reefs.

"The collaboration is monumental as it allows us to complete the substrate construction of the largest tributary-focused oyster reef restoration project on the East Coast, possibly the nation," said Stephan Abel, Oyster Recovery Partnership's executive director. "In all, more shell will be placed in Maryland waters over the next nine months than in the past decade, enough to cover 80 football fields with shell 12 inches deep."

In October, O'Malley announced that the state and its partners produced and planted 1.25 billion

oysters this year. In 2010, O'Malley launched the Oyster Restoration and Aquaculture Development Plan in hopes of rejuvenating the state's languishing oyster population.

---

© 2013 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.  
<http://www.miamiherald.com>