



UConn
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE,
HEALTH AND NATURAL
RESOURCES

Sea Grant
Connecticut



Connecticut Shell Recycling Program Update

2024 Gathering of Shellfish Commissions

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Recycling and Restoration)



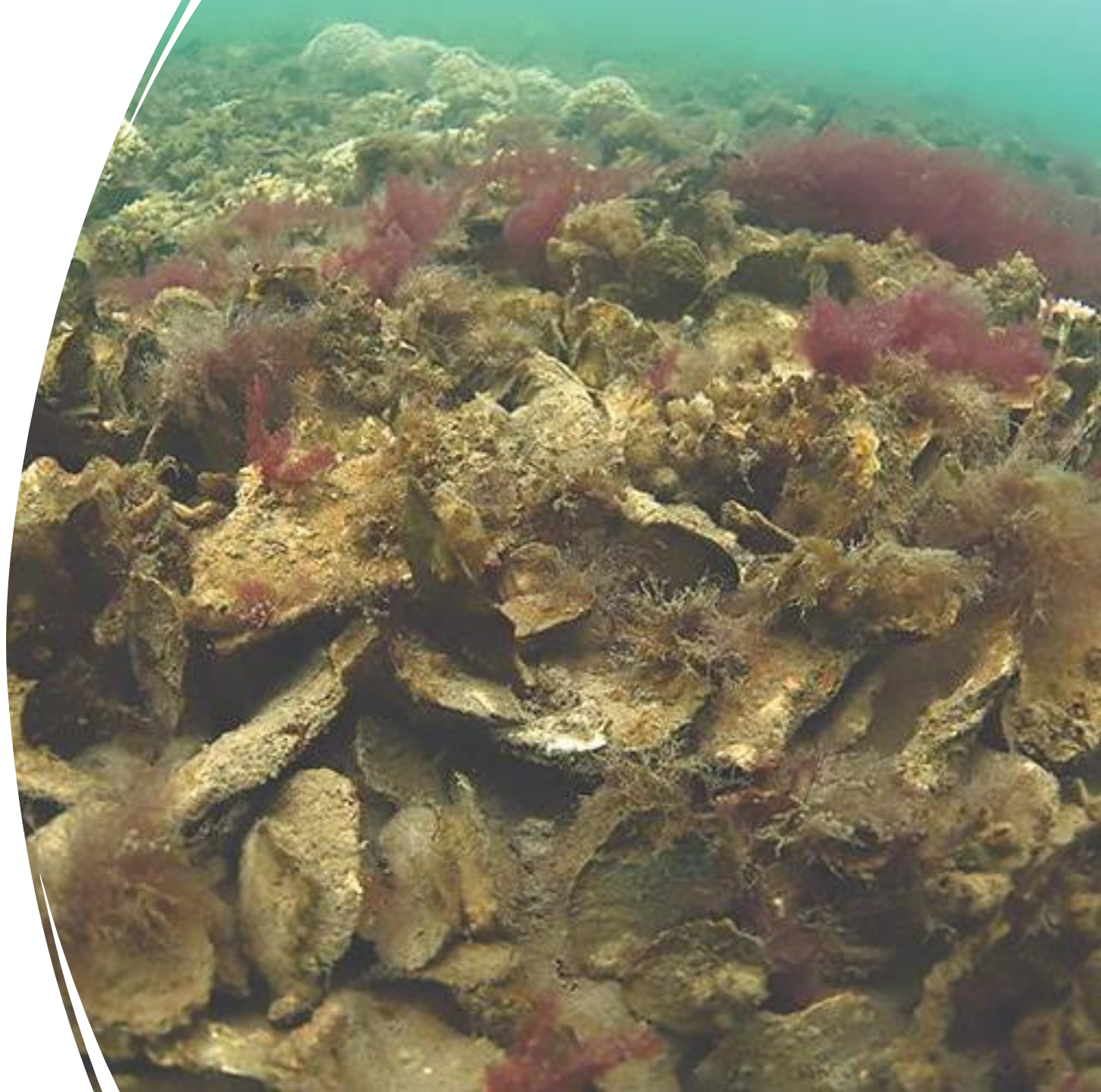
What is Shell Recycling?

- The process of collecting, curing, and reusing shells to rebuild, reinforce and maintain natural oyster populations.
 - Also called "Shell Recovery"
- Connecticut Public Act 21-24 – Effective in 2001



Why Recycle Shell? - Ecological Importance

- Oysters improve water quality via filter feeding
- Oyster shell is preferred substrate for oyster settlement
- Oyster beds can:
 - Provide habitat for other organisms
 - Protect against coastal erosion
- Oyster shell is in short supply

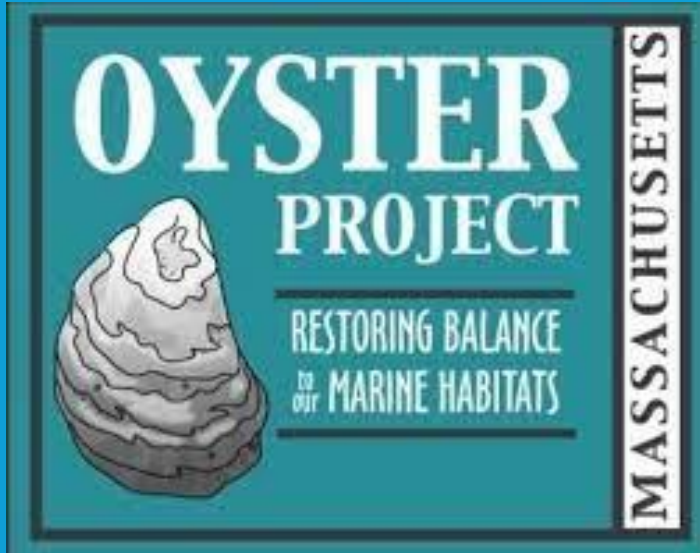


Why Recycle Shell? - Human Importance

- Connecticut produces:
 - Over 2 million tons of trash a year (DEEP CMMS)
 - 1.25 million tons of recyclables (DEEP CMMS)
- CT Public Act 14-94 – Passed in 2014 with a promise to create a strategy to reduce 60% of CT solid waste generation
- Previously, close to 100% of all bivalve shells disposed of as solid waste in CT!!
- Shell is HEAVY!!



Where has shell recycling been successful?



Active since 2021
throughout the
Mass/Cape Cod Coast



1,000 tons removed
since 2014. 122 million
oysters restored



6,000 tons removed
since 2014

How can shell recycling look in Connecticut?



Internal Process –
Farming

Check this out! -
[Traditional Oyster
Cultivation series -
SG/UConn Extension](#)



Non-Profit –
Municipality, CORR



For-Profit – Private
company (not well
understood yet)

CORR – Collective Oyster Recycling & Restoration

Mission:

- CORR is an environmental 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that facilitates a collaborative statewide shell recovery and recycling network and works with the CT Bureau of Aquaculture and shellfish farmers to conduct shellfish restoration projects in Long Island Sound.

History:

- CORR was founded in 2023
- CORR's founders started a small shell recycling program in 2015 in Fairfield with the Fairfield Shellfish Commission. That small program recycled over 90,000 pounds in nine years and became the pilot program for Connecticut. In an effort to expand shell recovery and recycling throughout the state, we created CORR.

Funding:

- CORR received its first grant, the 2023 Climate Smart Grant, from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. This grant allowed CORR to create and start an expanded shell recycling network in southwestern Connecticut.



CORR'S SHELL RECOVERY & RECYCLING PROGRAM: How It Works

- CORR partners with:
 - Seafood Wholesalers
 - Restaurants
 - Seafood Retailers
 - Raw Bar Caterers
 - Festivals & Events
- We provide these business with heavy duty 5-gallon screw top shell collection buckets and stainless-steel tabletop shell discard pails.
- We pick-up full buckets weekly and leave clean, sanitized buckets to be filled with more shells.



Shells We Recycle:

- Oyster
- Clam



COLLECTIVE OYSTER RECYCLING & RESTORATION Shell Recovery & Restoration Program



1. Shellfish farmers raise and harvest oysters and clams to be sold to restaurants and festivals.



2. Restaurants serve up fresh oysters and clams to their patrons. Customers discard the shells into tabletop shell recovery pails labeled with program information.



3. Shuckers and servers deposit the shells into durable screw top buckets. The full buckets are placed outside the restaurant in a designated area for weekly pickup. After pickup, clean, empty buckets are left behind for more shells.



4. CORR picks up the full shell buckets and transports them to our shell storage and curing site. The shells have to cure for a minimum of six months.



5. Cured shells are returned to Long Island Sound and used to grow more oysters for harvest and restoration projects.



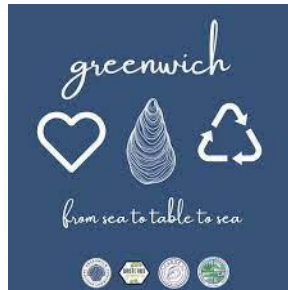
CORR'S SHELL RECOVERY & RECYCLING Partners

TOWNS:

ORGANIZATIONS:

- Greenwich
- Rowayton
- Norwalk
- Westport
- Fairfield
- Bridgeport
- West Haven
- New Haven
- Hartford
- Plantsville
- Bethel

- Fairfield Shellfish Commission
- Greenwich Shellfish Commission
- Waste Free Greenwich
- New Haven Office of Climate and Sustainability



CORR'S SHELL RECOVERY & RECYCLING PROGRAM: Collection Totals

Totals Since July 2023

Wholesalers = 158,540 lbs.

Restaurants = 24,050 lbs.

Festivals = 3787 lbs.

TOTAL = 186,377 pounds





Limitations do exist...

- Curing sites can be hard to come by!
 - Requires space without direct runoff potential
 - Authorized by Health Dept.
- Odor/Pest control
- Equipment:
 - Hydraulic dump trailer
 - Skid Steer/ 3/4 ton truck
 - Experienced Operators
- Transportation
- Funding
- Labor

SHELL RECOVERY & RECYCLING PROGRAM: Next Steps

- Does your town have restaurants and seafood businesses that sell shellfish?
- Does your Shellfish Commission have interest and the support system to start a program?
 - Commissions can begin public outreach with restaurants in their town
- CORR can also provide assistance with getting a program up and running. Once the program is established, Shellfish Commission members or community volunteers can run the weekly operations and shell collections.
- If your Shellfish Commission does not have the resources but wants to start a program, CORR can set up, provide equipment and run the weekly operations.
- Partnership with Greenwich Shellfish Commission and Waste Free Greenwich.

Educational Outreach

CORR attends festivals and events and sets up an information center to educate the public on the importance of shell recovery and recycling, shellfish restoration work, and the environmental benefits of oysters.



Contacts:



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