

Jamaica Bay Oyster Restoration Pilot Project

New York City CSO-PLANYC

Queens, New York, New York



Biohabitats led the implementation of a range of ecosystem restoration pilot projects within the Jamaica Bay watershed for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP). The pilot projects were first identified in the Jamaica Bay Watershed Protection Plan, which is focused on cleaning the water of the Bay and restoring ecological habitats.

Oyster restoration pilot projects in Jamaica Bay help determine the feasibility of large scale restoration to improve water quality and help protect vulnerable shorelines from erosion.

Oysters, which serve as natural water filters, once thrived in Jamaica Bay. Due to over-harvesting and other human disturbances, self-sustaining oyster populations are no longer found in the Bay.

In an effort to research the potential to restore oyster habitat in Jamaica Bay, Biohabitats and our joint venture partners helped NYCDEP initiate pilot oyster restoration projects in two locations within Jamaica Bay. In October 2010, Biohabitats installed an oyster bed off of Dubos Point in Queens and 12 oyster reef balls in Gerritsen Creek in Brooklyn. The oyster bed was constructed with spat-on-shell to mimic a small reef off the shores of Dubos Point, while the reef balls had been previously set with spat and were placed just off shore in Gerritsen Creek. Three years

of comprehensive monitoring and ongoing annual monitoring suggests that the oysters are not only able to survive, but reproduce, improve water quality, and enhance the ecology of the Bay. Laboratory testing also indicated that the oysters were relatively disease-free.

Throughout the effort, the team has been coordinating with other organizations and researchers undertaking similar efforts in the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary, and the pilot project is now informing other attempts to restore this significant habitat type to Jamaica Bay.

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