

Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership: FAQs

What is the Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership?

The Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership is a multi-year collaborative effort to add 10 billion oysters to the Bay by 2025. For it is only with a healthy Chesapeake oyster population that a restored Bay is possible. The *Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership* will improve water quality, engage new constituencies, and drive economic benefits across the region to accelerate ongoing oyster recovery efforts in the Chesapeake Bay.

Who is involved in the Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership?

A diverse group of partners have committed to making the *Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership* goal a reality. These partners include community organizations, universities, NGOs, and corporate and private partners. Watermen and aquaculturists are also important partners in this effort because of their crucial connection to the public and private fisheries where much of the Bay's increased oyster abundance will need to occur.

How does this partnership differ from existing oyster restoration efforts?

In recent years, recovery of Chesapeake Bay oyster populations has been accelerating due to state and federal agencies' large-scale efforts to restore 10 tributaries along with improvements in water quality, increasing disease resistance, growth of aquaculture on leased bottom, and scientific management of wild harvest. But without an ambitious, collaborative effort like the *Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership*, we will likely fall short of truly restoring this keystone species. By generating new partnerships and sparking innovation, this coalition will accelerate efforts that already show tremendous promise for the Bay's oyster populations, while also bringing new partners and approaches to this rapidly evolving field.

Where will the 10 billion new oysters come from?

The 10 billion oysters will come primarily from large-scale restoration efforts in Maryland and Virginia that support the Chesapeake Bay Program objective of restoring 10 tributaries by 2025, but will also include oysters planted in the aquaculture industry and wild fishery. For aquaculture, the stretch goals that we have laid out represent a significant increase of roughly 15 percent annually. For restoration, the expectations are in line with the significant planting effort we've seen over the past 7 years. However, considering current political and funding challenges, there is a critical need for the support of this partnership if we expect to maintain the restoration momentum of the past few years.

What are the key components of the Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership?

1. Restoration in Sanctuaries

Experience, adaptive management, and cutting-edge science are teaching us more about restoration every year, but the task is huge. At present, the largest contribution to restoration efforts comes from tributary-scale projects undertaken by state and federal agencies in support of Chesapeake Bay Program oyster restoration goals. We must continue to support these restoration efforts while developing opportunities to improve and expand. Not only will we rebuild habitat and water filtration capacity, but restored sanctuary reefs will produce oyster larvae to disperse to harvest bars as well as sanctuaries.

2. Public Fishery Management

Because more than 75 percent of the Bay's oyster bottom is open to commercial harvest, good management of these reefs represents a significant opportunity to recover the Bay's oyster population. Rotational harvest holds promise for stability in the fishery, but its success will depend on harvesters, packers, scientists, and managers working together. Science-based management should be employed with a goal of substantially increasing the number of oysters on public bars. It will be particularly important to devise a funding system that can make critical, strategic, up-front investments in bottom rehabilitation and spat-on-shell planting that will make the industry self-supporting and profitable in the long-term.

3. Aquaculture

Aquaculture provides a unique opportunity to support economic growth in coastal communities while providing sustainable seafood and water quality benefits. Aquaculture in Virginia has grown rapidly in recent years and Maryland's fledging industry is beginning to grow as well. The *Chesapeake 10 Billion Oysters Partnership* will support the continued growth of these industries to provide economic development opportunities, enhance water quality in the Bay, reduce fishing effort on wild oyster stocks, and provide novel structured habitat for commercial and recreational fishes.

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CHESAPEAKE 10B OYSTERS PARTNERSHIP

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Building Conservation Trust
Restore America's Estuaries

MARYLAND PARTNERS

Coastal Conservation Association Maryland
Downtown Sailing Center
Friends of St. Clements Bay
Friends of the Wicomico River
Harris Creek Oyster Company
Hoopers Island Oyster Co.
Lighthouse Point Marina
Living Classrooms Foundation
Mudgies Oyster Farm
National Aquarium
Orchard Point Oyster Company
Severn River Association
ShoreRivers
The Great Baltimore Oyster Partnership
University of Maryland Extension
War Horse Cities
Washington College
West-Rhode Riverkeeper

VIRGINIA PARTNERS

Chessie Seafood
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Elizabeth River Project
Lynnhaven River NOW
Pleasure House Oysters
Virginia Wesleyan University

SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS

Virginia Institute of Marine Science
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center