

THE INDEPENDENT

100,000 "SPAT-ON-SHELL" OYSTERS PLACED ON MONTAUK BOTTOMLANDS

Oyster Reef Planted at Gurney's Star Island

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The location of an oyster reef situated at Gurney's Star Island.

Gurney's Star Island Resort & Marina, Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program and Concerned Citizens of Montauk have joined together to start an oyster reef on Lake Montauk.

On July 27, the groups placed approximately 100,000 spat-on-shell oysters right offshore of the Gurney's property. Spat is a term used when oyster larvae attaches to a surface. These tiny oysters were set on recycled oyster shells in Cornell's shellfish hatchery.

The purpose of the reef is to improve water quality, enhance local oyster populations and provide an important underwater habitat for local fish species. The site at Gurney's will also be used to educate guests on the importance of the local marine environment.



Spat-on-shell oysters. Photo courtesy Gurney's Star Island.

Kimberly Barbour, CCE's marine program outreach manager said that the group is grateful to have Gurney's support and that they "appreciate their commitment to continuing to expand our collaborative efforts to improve the local marine environment and provide meaningful education experiences to resort guests."

Since the collaborative began, the teams have provided a youth education program that include topics like water quality, aquaculture, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics), and fisheries.

"With maritime culture being an integral part of our DNA, we aim to thoughtfully engage in sustainable practices within water quality, habitat, aquaculture and STEAM – all of which are very important to our community," said George Filopoulos, the owner of Gurney's Resorts. Filopoulos notes that last summer they successfully partnered with CCE to deliver "a custom youth education program involving those practices and this year we are honored to once again collaborate with CCE to support the marine environment and educate our guests about the importance of protecting our waters."

Gurney's Star Island also hosts one of CCE's FLUPSYs (floating upweller system) that could help grow millions of clams and oysters in support of local shellfish restoration efforts. The oysters will grow into a reef that will serve as an important underwater habitat.

“CCOM is thrilled that CCE’s shellfish restoration experts have teamed up with Gurney’s. I cannot wait to see how this project develops and expands over the years,” said Laura Tooman, the president of Concerned Citizens of Montauk.

It is expected that the oyster reef will deploy up to one million spat-on-shell oysters over the next ten years.

For more info visit backtothebays.org/gurneys.

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