

**MEDIA RELEASE**

July 29, 2020

**CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MARINE PROGRAM, GURNEY'S RESORTS AND CONCERNED CITIZENS OF MONTAUK CONTINUE PARTNERSHIP WITH LAUNCH OF NEW OYSTER REEF**

*Long Island Entities Focused on Sustainability Place More Than 100,000 Spat-on-Shell Oysters in Lake Montauk to Support Water Quality and Enhance Local Oyster Populations*

**Montauk, NY (July 29, 2020)** — [Gurney's Star Island Resort & Marina](#), [Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program](#) (CCE), and [Concerned Citizens of Montauk](#) (CCOM) celebrated the deployment of a new Spat-on-shell Oyster Reef on Monday, July 27. Situated on Lake Montauk and home to the largest marina in the Hamptons, Gurney's Star Island has been focused on sustainability and community engagement by integrating local organizations since opening in May 2019. The collaborative effort between the Long Island entities involved placing approximately 100,000 Spat-on-shell oysters on the bottomlands right offshore of the property. Spat-on-shell oysters are tiny oysters set on recycled oyster shells in Cornell's shellfish hatchery. The purpose of the new Oyster Reef is to improve water quality, enhance local oyster populations and provide important underwater habitat for local fish species. The site at Gurney's Star Island will also serve to educate resort and marina guests on the importance of the marine environment through signage.

This is the most recent collaborative effort between Gurney's Star Island and CCE; a relationship which was fostered by CCOM. Since the collaborative partnership was established, the entities have delivered a custom youth education program including impactful topics like water quality, aquaculture, STEAM, and fisheries. Gurney's Star Island also hosts one of CCE's FLUPSYs (floating upweller system) that is capable of helping grow millions of clams and oysters in support of local shellfish restoration efforts. These oysters will continue to grow into a reef that will serve as important underwater habitat for local fish species, help improve water quality and enhance local oyster populations.

"We are grateful to have the support of Gurney's Resorts and appreciate their commitment to continuing to expand our collaborative efforts to improve the local marine environment and provide meaningful education experiences to resort guests," said Kimberly Barbour, CCE Marine Program Outreach Manager.

"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. Last summer, we successfully partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program 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," said Owner of Gurney's Resorts, George Filopoulos.

“CCOM is thrilled that CCE’s shellfish restoration experts have teamed up with Gurney’s, a local business who is serving as steward of our environment, doing their part to improve our local waters. I cannot wait to see how this project develops and expands over the years,” noted Laura Tooman, President of Concerned Citizens of Montauk.

It is expected that the oyster reef will be expanded, with the potential to deploy up to one million Spat-on-shell oysters at Gurney’s Star Island over the next ten years. In order to reach these goals Gurney’s Resorts has committed to being a long-term sponsor of the Oyster Reef site. CCE is also accepting donations in support of the Oyster Reef expansion. To learn more about this collaboration and how you can help, please visit: [www.backtothebays.org/gurneys](http://www.backtothebays.org/gurneys).

To learn more about Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program, please visit [ccesuffolk.org/marine](http://ccesuffolk.org/marine).

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