

A photograph of a person's hands holding a white bucket, pouring a large quantity of oysters into a large pile of oysters. The oysters are dark brown and white, and are falling from the bucket. The background is a blurred green field.

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Massachusetts Oyster
Project, Inc.

Who We Are

The Massachusetts Oyster Project (Mass Oyster) is an all-volunteer organization dedicated to the restoration of oysters and native shellfish to the state's marine estuaries. Oysters naturally filter pollutants and runoff out of coastal water, promote biodiversity, and reduce coastal erosion.

We engage in 4 primary activities.

Restoration - In partnership with local organizations, we establish and maintain oyster upwellers across coastal Massachusetts. These upwellers grow native oysters for local restoration and population enhancement. We also support other programs by municipalities and nonprofits with aligned goals.

Shell Recycling - We partner with local restaurants and events to gather and recycle oyster shells. That shell is processed, aged and put to work growing native oyster populations.

Education - We engage with school groups, Scout troops, and other environmental organizations about native shellfish and coastal environmental issues.

Advocacy - We act to lobby the legislature to adopt policies that support oyster recycling and restoration.



Why?

The cities and towns of Massachusetts are rediscovering their coastlines. Humans have damaged the environment for generations. Through overharvesting, shoreline development, and polluting practices they have devastated coastal ecosystems.

The silver lining is that we now have a better understanding of how important these ecosystems actually are. Large scale green engineering projects like New York's coastline serve as an example to communities everywhere. They show that living shoreline features like oyster reefs are the most effective and valuable option for restoration.

A single oyster can filter pollutants from 50 gallons of seawater per day. Millions of oysters can clean billions of gallons of water. Oysters naturally grow in reefs. These reefs work like coral reefs, offering refuge for myriad species of fish, crab, and other marine life. Oyster beds have 50 times the surface area of a simple ocean floor. These nooks and crannies offer protection and homes to the other species of marine life.

Oysters can play a huge role in mitigating the effects of climate change.

Storm Surge - Wild oyster reefs off-shore can play a similar role that coral reefs play in tropical climates. Severe storms bring severe waves, which would break farther out, causing less damage.

Ocean Acidification - As the ocean warms, it's acidifying, killing marine life. Oyster shells are natural bicarbonates and help reduce acidification.

Erosion - The nooks and crannies of a reef support an incredible amount of sea life. Bringing back reefs will turn a barren desert-like sea-bottom into a lush biosphere. That, in turn, reduces coastal erosion.

Letter From The President

Welcome to 2022! I am excited to say that 2021 was a successful and very impactful year. Despite the continued challenges posed by the global pandemic, Mass Oyster continued our oyster reintroduction program at full strength while launching a new shell recycling program.

I want to begin by extending a special thank-you to Sarah Valencik for her service as our board president for the last two years. To give of oneself in an all-volunteer non-profit organization takes a special person; Sarah's dedication and knowledge has greatly contributed to our success. Sarah will continue to participate as an advisory board member and oversee our upweller and shell recycling programs.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the entire Mass Oyster team, including our volunteers, donors, and board members that make all we do possible. I am proud to be part of this passionate and engaged community that brings excitement, knowledge and unique talents together to make the organization a success. The challenge of running a dynamic non-profit such as ours takes a lot of hard work and time commitment. Our success in 2021 was a direct result of our combined efforts. Thank you one and all.

I am excited to take on the role of president and it is an honor to serve in this leadership role. I have been a board member and volunteer for over 11 years and have served as clerk, secretary, treasurer, and vice president. It has been amazing to experience the organization's growth over those years. I am optimistic about our future, and with the support of our dedicated community we are well positioned to grow our impact to new heights.

I hope you continue to support us, follow us and stay in touch as we work to improve the world in which we live, one gallon of water, one oyster at a time. Stay tuned...we have an exciting year ahead.

Sincerely,
Theresa N. Baybutt

Shell Recycling

In our 2020 annual report, we discussed the ongoing challenges of kickstarting and maintaining a successful shell recycling program.

In 2021, we made major strides. With critical grant support from 11th Hour Racing and in partnership with the Town of Wellfleet, we successfully executed a shell recycling program with eight Wellfleet restaurants from late spring to early fall. Restaurants normally have to pay to dispose of shells. Our no-cost shell pickups presented a win-win for restaurants and the environment.

At a total cost of \$11,160, the program diverted 26,241 pounds of oyster shells from the landfill. These shells will eventually make their way into Wellfleet waters after a one-year aging process at the Wellfleet Transfer Station. When in the water, the shell will support generations of native oysters that benefit water quality, support biodiversity, and provide economic and recreational harvest opportunities.

The program was featured by the Cape Cod Times, NPR, and local outlets.

Learn more at massoyster.org/shell-recycling



Shell Recycling in 2022

We hope to build off this success and expand and sustain the program in 2022. We are working to identify funding opportunities, build a sustainable and resilient staffing and operational model, and expand our educational impacts to engage with the local Cape Cod community.

Team Spotlight

Lucas Baybutt spends as much time on the Cape as he can. The romance and intrigue of the peninsula inspires his art, and the popular summertime destination is home to a special community for Lucas. So naturally, the longtime Mass Oyster volunteer and recent graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts jumped at the chance to work as our shell recycling pickup supervisor in Wellfleet.

Driving the route between restaurants, his truck became a familiar sight around the historic shellfishing town. Education was the principal reason he got involved with Mass Oyster, and making regular pickups was just part of the job. Whether through media appearances or conversations in restaurant kitchens and on Wellfleet sidewalks, Lucas helped locals and visitors understand why oyster restoration is important and how recycling shells makes it possible. We look forward to seeing what Lucas does next.



Upwellers

Between Gloucester, Marblehead, Barnstable and Nantucket, our upweller program raised 260,000 native Eastern oysters, which were joyfully released into Gloucester's Mill River, Cotuit Bay in Barnstable, and a site in Essex. We monitor population establishment and growth at these sites.



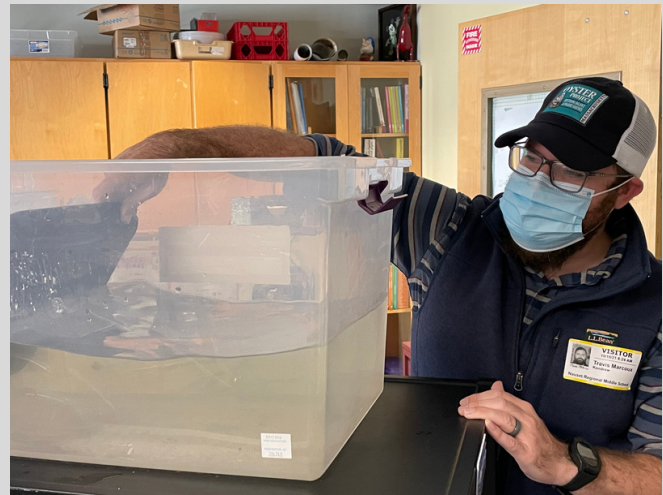
These programs require regular maintenance and are made possible thanks to our core team of Sarah Valencik and Steve Parkes as well as partners including the Barnstable Clean Water Coalition, Town of Barnstable, Sea Scouts Ship 5, Marblehead Shark Club, and Madaket Marine.



In the coming year, our upweller program goals - beyond another successful year of upweller operations and education - include outplanting oysters at Shimmo Reef on Nantucket and establishing a new upweller in Duxbury.

Education

While the pandemic created obstacles for educational programming, one event merits highlighting. Advisory board members Travis Marcoux and Mark Wagner joined Board President Theresa Baybutt at Nauset Middle School on Oct 18 to work with their 7th grade science classes. Presenting to over 200 students, we used two experiments to demonstrate the benefits oysters have on water quality and for coastal resiliency.



In one experiment, Theresa featured two fish tanks each filled with silty water collected from a nearby cove. One bowl contained a dozen oysters, the other did not. Over the course of the day, the oysters turned the silty water clear as they filtered and fed on microscopic phytoplankton suspended in the water.

In the other experiment, Travis utilized a large clear bin partially filled with water to demonstrate how oyster reefs break up wave energy and mitigate coastal erosion and flooding. Travis also talked with the students about how oyster reefs create lagoons that provide refuge and a nursery for a wide variety of marine animals, functioning as a keystone species.

Looking forward to spring, we hope to continue working with Nauset Middle School teachers including Aaron Canter and Ingrid Kendrew to bring the students on field trips. We also hope the students and their families will get involved with our projects in Wellfleet and Hyannis.

Partnering with MIT Sea Grant to Support Coastal Communities



MIT Sea Grant created the *COVID-19 Response Funding for Municipal Shellfish Programs and Industry Support Program* in response to economic impacts on the shell fishing industry in Massachusetts. The grant program, designed to support municipal propagation programs and the shellfish industry, awarded a total of \$79,950 in grant funds to nine coastal Massachusetts towns. Mass Oyster provided \$5,000 in matching grant funds to the town of Wellfleet and served on the program's review panel.

The town of Wellfleet was awarded \$10,000 to purchase oysters from local growers at \$.50 a piece to supplement the recreational harvest area ahead of the 2022 season. The Town provided \$10,000 in matching funds and Mass Oyster provided \$5,000. In total, 50,000 oysters were purchased from local growers. The 10,000 oysters purchased with Mass Oyster funds were released to a deep water area where they will be less vulnerable to harvest and winter ice and more likely to spawn this spring.



Program Partners

These are organizations we work with on some of our programs. We couldn't have had the success we had in 2021 without these organizations and the people who power them. We are grateful for the continued and growing support of people and communities around coastal Massachusetts who are aligned with this important work.

Maritime Gloucester

The maritime museum, sea pocket aquarium and working waterfront is the long-time home of our first upweller in Gloucester. They hosted the upweller on the pier for another year.

The Town of Barnstable

Barnstable Clean Water Coalition

These organizations provided a restoration site for seeding our oysters and shell and ran their own upweller in Hyannis.

Marblehead Shark Club

The kids and adult leaders at the Marblehead Community Charter Public School were once again helpful volunteers at our Marblehead upweller, culminating in a memorable oyster release event in the fall.

Madaket Marine

Now in their second year, our friends in Nantucket have doubled their upweller output.



Financial Overview

2021 was another strong financial year for us. While the success of the vaccine program made it look like we could return to in-person fundraising, the rise of the Delta and Omicron variants made us decide to focus again on online fundraising. Our supporters responded by making this one of our most successful years ever. That, combined with a grant to help run our shell recycling program, made this our biggest budget year yet.

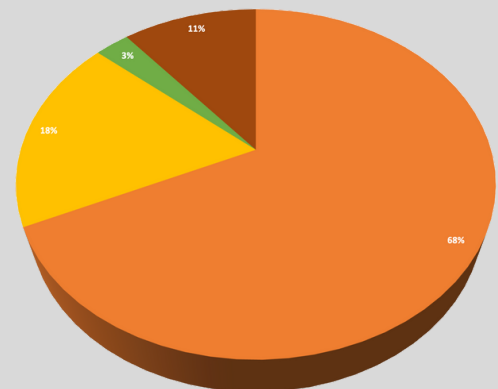
We are also proud to share that we earned a gold seal of transparency from Guidestar.



Budget Breakdown

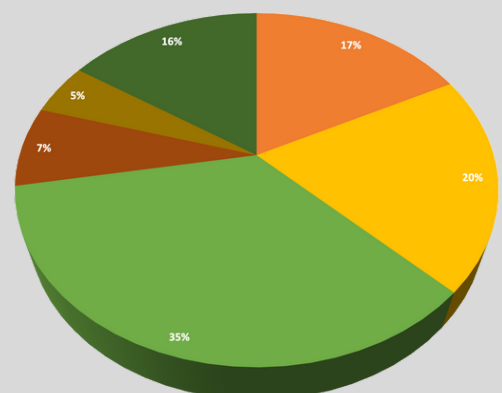
Revenue

Donations - \$37,359.05
Grants - \$10,000
Merchandise - \$1,526.62
Event Sponsorships - \$6,000
Total Revenue - \$54,885.67



Expenses

Administration - \$5,582.90
Upweller Materials - \$6,323.38
Shell Recycling - \$11,163.70
Merchandise - \$2,339.46
Education and Promotion - \$1,540.76
Grants - \$5,000
Total Expenses - \$31,950.20



Our Supporters

This year, we focused on online fundraising. Donations came in throughout the year but we focused our efforts into an end-of-year email and board giving campaign. A more aggressive strategy and matching funds from Long Wharf Supply Co. helped shatter last year's fundraising total and our own goal for 2021. Overall, we raised over \$37,000 from 318 donors. The end of year campaign had a goal of \$15,000 and ended up raising \$21,271 from 165 supporters.

Our Sponsors

Long Wharf Supply Co.

A new partner who became a key matching donor for our end-of-year campaign. Long Wharf makes sustainable apparel (pictured, left) out of recycled plastic, natural wool, and oyster shells.

Proud Pour

One of our longest-running sponsors, Proud Pour donates a portion of the profit from each bottle of their sauvignon blanc to coastal restoration nonprofits. We're proud to be one of them.

Sailormade

A local company that uses their nautical heritage to inspire beautiful accessories. We helped provide them with oysters for their decoupage kits and received a portion of every kit sold.

Treasure Bay Jewelry

A long-time partner that donates a portion of every piece of pearl jewelry sold.



Board of Directors

Theresa Baybutt (President)

Alexandra Coughlin

Andrew Hutlin

Gisella de la Rocha

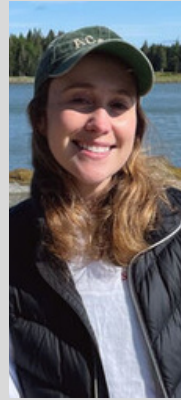
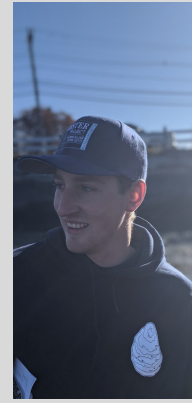
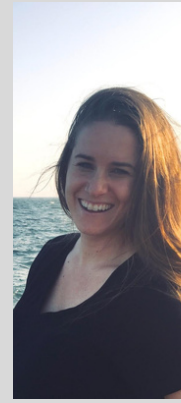
Jon Pollak

Joseph Caiazzo

Josh Gee

Michael Bridges

Nate Bernitz



Advisory Board

Adam Heilemann

Andrew Jay

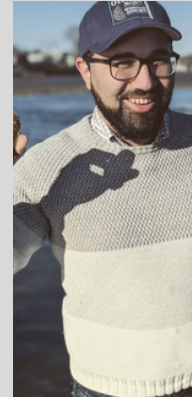
Mark Wagner

Matt Harke

Sarah Valencik

Steve Parkes

Travis Marcoux





Massachusetts Oyster Project Annual Report 2021

Editor: Josh Gee Design: Nate Bernitz

A special thank you to Cory Silken Photo, who took many of the photos in this report.

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