



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Massachusetts Oyster
Project, Inc.

Who We Are

The Massachusetts Oyster Project (Mass Oyster) is 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 four primary activities:

Restoration - We partner with local organizations to build and maintain oyster upwellers across coastal Massachusetts. These upwellers grow native oysters for local restoration and population enhancement. We support other programs by municipalities and nonprofits with aligned goals.

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

Education - We speak with school groups, scout troops, and other environmental community organizations about native shellfish and coastal environmental issues.

Advocacy - We lobby state and local governments to adopt policies that support oyster recycling and restoration.



Why?

The cities and towns of Massachusetts are rediscovering their coastlines. For over 100 years, overharvesting, shoreline development, and polluting practices have devastated coastal ecosystems. But that is changing.

We have a better understanding of how important these ecosystems actually are. Large-scale green engineering projects like New York's coastline are an example to communities everywhere. Communities are looking to living shorelines and the natural environment to protect against climate change.

That includes oyster beds.

A single oyster can filter pollutants from up to 50 gallons of seawater per day. Millions of oysters can clean billions of gallons of water. Oysters naturally grow in reef beds, offering refuge for over 200 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 for marine life.

Oysters can also help mitigate impacts of climate change on the Commonwealth.

Oyster beds protect against storm surge. Wild oyster beds offshore play a similar role that coral reefs play in tropical climates. Severe storms bring severe waves, which would break farther out, causing less damage.

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

Oysters prevent coastal erosion. The nooks and crannies of a bed support an incredible amount of sea life. Bringing back these beds will turn a barren desert-like sea-bottom into a lush biosphere. That combination of the plants and the beds themselves reduce coastal erosion.

Letter from the Chair

It's a pleasure for me to contribute to the 2023 annual report of the Massachusetts Oyster Project. I joined the organization early in the year and became Chair of the Board of Directors over the summer. Previously, the organization was led by the extraordinary Theresa Baybutt. She was a wonderful role model for leading a volunteer organization and also a hard act to follow!

I joined Mass Oyster for one simple reason - the mission of restoring oysters to Massachusetts coastal waters. I grew up on Cape Cod digging for quahogs and oysters in Waquoit Bay. I live in Gloucester and sail in Essex and Ipswich Bay. I am deeply connected to our coast. **As a marine scientist, I know that oysters are a critical part of our ecosystem.** They can clean the water, protect the shore, help address climate change, and provide rich habitat for other creatures. **If we give them the chance.**

In 2023 we made some important strides as an organization by hiring an outstanding executive director, Liv Woods. The hard work of Program Manager Erika Smith and her staff and volunteers grew our shell recycling program in Wellfleet. And we operated six upwellers staffed by volunteers on Cape Cod, the Islands and the North Shore to seed oysters back in the water. We also continued to build new connections with state and local communities around oyster restoration.

In 2024, I have high hopes that we can build upon all the hard work over the past years and keep growing our programs. We need to expand if we are to make serious progress on oyster restoration. I know that with our great board members, advisors, staff, our terrific volunteers, and our generous donors this is possible. I am sure 2024 will be a great year for the Massachusetts Oyster Project!

Andrew A. Rosenberg, Ph.D.
Board Chair



Meet Liv

Liv Woods joined Mass Oyster as Executive Director in May, 2023. At a young age, Liv discovered her love for the ocean while sailing on her family's sailboat around the Buzzards Bay area. She brings 20 years of experience across a breadth of industries: healthcare, health insurance, hospital management, and academic organizations. In addition, she has been active with a range of consulting engagements with for-profit and non-profit organizations. Liv was previously employed by one of Boston's largest health insurance companies Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, where for almost a decade she was part of the strategic planning division, as well as a member of the internal consulting group. In her most recent role, Liv was Director of Fundraising and Operations with the American Amputee Soccer Association.

She is currently board chair for Tomorrow's Women Today, a board member for the American Amputee Soccer Association, sits on the PTG for her children's elementary school, and volunteers for Open Table Food Pantry. Liv has a B.A. from University of Connecticut and M.B.A from Simmons School of Management.



Upwellers

2023 was a strong year for our upweller program, with almost 300,000 oysters grown and planted around the Commonwealth. We have six upwellers across the state in Gloucester, Marblehead, Barnstable, Nantucket (x2), and Manchester-by-the-Sea.

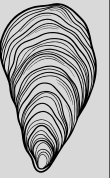
In the beginning of the summer, we buy baby oysters, called seed, from a hatchery. This year, we purchased the majority of our spat from Muscongus Bay Aquaculture. They begin as the size of red pepper flakes and will grow to about an inch by fall. At that point, we release the oysters at locations we have arranged.

2023 saw a new upweller at Petrel Landing in Nantucket. We partnered with the Nantucket Land Council and Nantucket Natural Resources. The spat was provided by a local hatchery and the upweller itself was repurposed from an old one the hatchery no longer needed. Over the course of the season we grew and released about 17,000 oysters locally in Nantucket.

We already have plans in 2024 for a new upweller site in Yarmouth.

Upwellers

- Show how oysters improve water quality
- Help grow oysters for restoration efforts
- Serve an important role to get the general public interested in shellfish conservation



Our Upweller Partners

Our upwellers wouldn't be possible without the help of local community groups. These groups do the bulk of the monitoring, cleaning, and maintaining our upwellers. We are grateful for the continued and growing support of people and communities around coastal Massachusetts.

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

BCWC ran the upweller in Hyannis and the oysters grown in that upweller were seeded by the Town of Barnstable into local shellfishing beds.

Marblehead Shark Club

The kids and adult leaders at the Marblehead Community Charter Public School were once again great volunteers at our Marblehead upweller.

Madaket Marine

Our friends in Nantucket successfully ran one upweller this year as well as supported other upweller groups.

Manchester Harbor Boat Club

MHBC had a great second year. Their oysters (along with Gloucester's) ended up seeded into Gloucester's Mill River.

Nantucket Land Council

Nantucket Natural Resources

Built and launched a new upweller in Petrel landing. We're glad to welcome them to the Mass Oyster family.

Oysters Released!

One of the highlights of our year is the conclusion of our upweller season because that's when we can release our oysters into open waters.



North Shore

Our Gloucester upweller successfully grew 60,000 oysters, and our Manchester-by-the-Sea upweller grew another 20,000 oysters. 60,000 oysters at our Marblehead upweller were not able to be released because of a disease detected in mandatory pathology testing. 80,000 oysters were released into Gloucester's Mill River, a grow site that we've used and monitored for several years.

Hyannis and Barnstable

120,000 oysters were successfully grown at our Hyannis upweller and released in Barnstable's Cotuit Bay.

Nantucket

Our Nantucket Upweller at Petrel Landing grew and released 17,000 oysters at 1st Point in Nantucket Harbour.



Shell Recycling



This year we expanded the shell recycling program in a number of ways. We had more staff, more restaurant partners, and collected more shell than previous years.

Our target for this year was 50,000 lbs of oyster shell. **We beat that goal, collecting 55,000 lbs.** That's the equivalent of a fully-loaded Mack Truck of oyster shells that won't be going to landfills but will instead go towards rebuilding oyster beds. But we also experimented with new ways to collect shell.



Restaurant Partners

This year we expanded our footprint to new towns and a total of nineteen restaurants and bars across the Cape.

Chatham

- Mac's Chatham Fish and Lobster
- Del Mar Bar & Bistro

Eastham

- Arnold's Lobster and Clam Bar
- Brine

Wellfleet

- Beachcomber
- CShore
- Hog Island Surf Lodge
- Mac's Shack
- Moby Dick's
- Pearl
- Winslow's Tavern
- Wicked Oyster
- Van Rensselaer's
- Wellfleet Bookstore & Restaurant

Orleans

- The Barley Neck

Provincetown

- Governor Bradford Restaurant
- Mac's Fish House
- The Lobster Pot
- The Squealing Pig



We thank these restaurants and their staff for participating and hope to work with them in the future!

If you are a restaurant on the Lower or Outer Cape that would like to join our recycling program, reach out to our team at contact@massoyster.org.

Learn more at massoyster.org/shell-recycling

Shell Recycling Highlights

Farmer's Market Popups

For the first time, Mass Oyster had a booth at the Farmers' Market in Orleans. We used that location as a community dropoff for oyster shells, education, and merchandise sales. **Thanks to the generous support and sponsorship of Winslow's Tavern, we were able to be there all season!** We also had a few pop ups at the Wellfleet Farmers' Market.



Recycled Shell Hits The Water

Recycled shell ages for one year while natural decomposition gets rid of any bacteria. Last spring, the shell we recollected in 2022 was ready to be put to use!



Our partners at the Wellfleet Shellfish Department wanted to use the shell to run an experiment on natural oyster recruitment (recruitment is the technical term for attracting new oysters to a particular area). An amazing team of volunteers met and loaded the now-clean shell into giant plastic mesh bags. The Wellfleet Shellfish Department deployed the bags in Chipman's Cove to see what effect the bags would have spurring natural oyster growth. The pilot was successful, but we didn't see as much development as we would have hoped. In October, volunteers opened the bags, dumping the oysters into the harbor while keeping plastic materials out.

Our Shell Recycling Team



None of this amazing work would have been possible without our outstanding 2023 staff. We want to thank:

- Lisa Anderson
- Allison Bissett
- Teresa Donahue
- Mark Howards
- Marla Hyora
- Becca McCue
- Steve Morris
- Michael O'Mahoney
- Stephen Powell
- Anna Sotar
- Damon Wei

Coming Up in 2024

Our shell recycling program is a constant work in progress. We're tweaking a few aspects of the program for 2024. We'll be talking to restaurant partners about if they would be willing to donate to cover the cost of the program. We're saving up to invest in our own infrastructure like panel trucks to make pickups more efficient.

We'll also be expanding dramatically by partnering with the Town of Yarmouth and A.R.C. Hatchery to open a shell recycling depot in Yarmouth. One of our biggest hurdles is the time, effort, and greenhouse gasses we produce criss-crossing the Cape bringing shells from restaurants to Wellfleet. A new shell recycling drop-off will open up new opportunities in the mid-Cape region.

Financial Overview

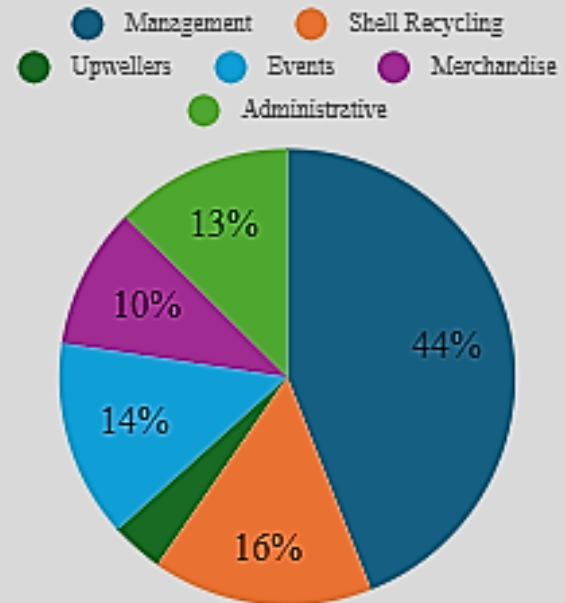
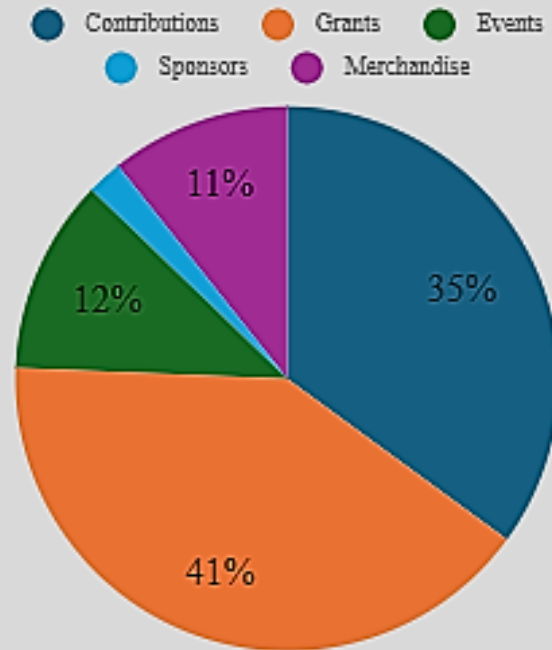
In late 2022 and early 2023 we made the decision that it was time to take Mass Oyster to the next level: bring on an Executive Director and Program Manager.

Beyond expanding our program impact, they also ended up bringing in significantly more money. In particular, staff with the time and attention to apply for grants brought in new revenue to support our expanded shell recycling programs. That, combined with a successful fundraiser and aggressive online fundraising put us on extremely strong financial footing for 2024.

We are proud to have received GuideStar's Gold Seal of Transparency. Visit our profile at [guidestar.org/profile/26-3112469](https://www.guidestar.org/profile/26-3112469)



Revenue



Expenses

'Give a Shuck' Fundraiser

2022's Give a Shuck was such a success we decided to make it an annual tradition. This year we moved it to a new time and location. On a warm October day, friends and supporters gathered along the Charles at Community Rowing.



We enjoyed local oysters from Pangea, a selection of specialty drinks, local food trucks, and live music from The Splinters. Through our combined ticket sales, merch sales, and silent auction, we raised over \$20,000 to support our mission.



Save the date for October 5th, 2024, when we'll hold next year's Give a Shuck at the same location.



We want to give a special thanks to everyone who made the event a success, including event sponsors Long Wharf, Madaket Marine, Moët Chandon, Rockland Bank, Treasure Bay Jewellery, Newburyport Fish Co, and Uncle Nearest.



A special thank-you to Emily Clark and Maureen Hautaniemi, who did the bulk of the planning and organizing.

Grants

One of our 2023 goals was to more aggressively apply for grants and additional funding sources for some of our core programs. We're deeply grateful for the organizations that have opted to support our mission.

- 11th Hour Racing - 11th hour mobilizes sports, maritime and coastal communities with an innovative approach to inspire solutions for the ocean. They are long-time partners of Mass Oyster and once again generously supported our shell recycling program.

Oyster restoration programs were made possible with support from 11th Hour Racing's grant program, funded by The Schmidt Family Foundation.



11th Hour Racing's grant program supports pilot programs that model best practices of sustainability, restore coastal ecosystems, and advance ocean stewardship to create systemic change to restore ocean health. Focus areas include ocean literacy and stewardship, clean technologies and best practices, and ecosystem restoration.

- Cape Cod Foundation - A foundation that exists to strengthen and enrich the Cape Cod community. They awarded us a grant to support our shell recycling program and other initiatives.
- Wellfleet Oyster Alliance (formally SPAT) - Wellfleet Oyster Alliance serves the storied shellfishing industry of their hometown, Wellfleet, Massachusetts. We've worked with the team at the Wellfleet Oyster Alliance for years as part of Wellfleet Oysterfest. This year they awarded us a grant to support the Wellfleet aspects of our shell recycling program.
- SBB Research Group Foundation - A national organization that focuses on supporting nonprofits with long-term strategies to support unmet needs. They awarded us a grant to support general activities and shell recycling.

Our Volunteers

We want to extend a special thank-you to the dozens of volunteers who helped in all areas of our programming this year.

- The team that came together in February 2023 to bag a portion of the 38,000 lbs of shell we collected in 2022. For full details, read “Recycled shell hits the water”,
- The crew that helped staff our booth at the Farmers' Market in Orleans, and
- The folks that helped staff our booth at the Wellfleet and Newburyport oyster festivals.

Our Corporate Partners

We are deeply grateful for partners that share our vision and support our mission to restore Massachusetts beaches and shores. The following organizations made significant contributions to Mass Oyster in 2023:

LONG WHARF
SUPPLY CO.

ROCKLAND
TRUST
BANK
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Marine Ecologist, Ocean Policy Specialist

Nate Bernitz, Secretary

Community & Economic Development Specialist

UNH Cooperative Extension

Sam Peper, Treasurer

CPA, CPBI

Finance Transformation Consultant at Life Sciences

Collaborative LLC

Joseph Caiazzo

Co-founder

The JCN Group

Emily Clark

Project Manager at the Consortium of Universities for the

Advancement of Hydrologic Science, Inc. (CUAHSI)

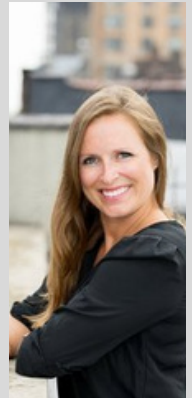
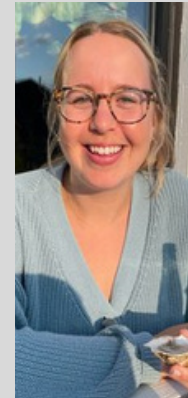
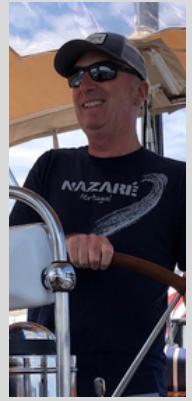
Bridget Callahan

Associate Sustainability Manager Ocean Spray Cranberries

Joshua Gee

Head of Product

Speedlane Consulting



Staff

Erika Smith

Program Manager

Liv Woods

Executive Director

*Board and staff, in order listed
Current as of March 2024*

Advisory Board

Theresa Baybutt

Alexandra Coughlin

Adam Heilemann

Andrew Hultin

Andrew Jay, Co-Founder

Steve Parkes

Sarah Valencik

Dr. Mark Wagner



Massachusetts Oyster Project, Inc. Annual Report 2023

Editor: Josh Gee Design: Nate Bernitz

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