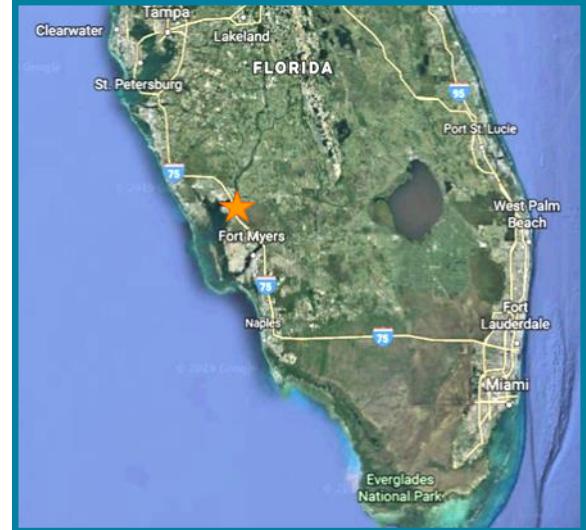


Trabue Harborwalk Oyster Habitat Restoration

FISH, WILDLIFE, & HABITAT RESTORATION



Summary

The CHNEP management goal for oysters is to enhance and restore a vibrant, self-sustaining oyster reef habitat throughout the estuaries, tidal rivers, and creeks within the CHNEP area. In 2012, the Charlotte Harbor Oyster Habitat Restoration Plan was created by CHNEP, The Nature Conservancy, and the Southwest Florida Oyster Working Group. This was the first estuary-wide, science-based oyster habitat restoration Plan in Florida. The Plan features a Restoration Suitability Model that maps locations of restoration areas based on acknowledged criteria. It identified over 40,000 acres of highly suitable areas for oyster restoration within the CHNEP area.

The location selected for this particular project was a shallow intertidal area of Peace River along 'Trabue Harborwalk', a walking trail and park in Punta Gorda. The goal of this project was to create oyster reef habitat while testing the success of various oyster growing methods, including oyster mats, loose shell fragments, and oyster bags.

CHNEP assisted in the planning of this project, as well as the creation and coordination of a Volunteer Oyster Habitat Monitoring (VOHM) program. The VOHM was a critical step in recording useful data to provide insight that would otherwise not be accessible to scientists and resource managers.

Location: Charlotte County, FL

Partners: The Nature Conservancy, Southwest Florida Oyster Working Group, Florida Department of Environmental Protection-Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, The City of Punta Gorda, and CHNEP Citizen Scientists

Implemented: 2015

Status: Completed

CHNEP Cost: \$15,000

Funding Source: Sally Mead Hands Foundation, private donors, and Mosaic funds managed through CHNEP

2019 CHNEP Plan Activity:

Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Restoration
1.1: Protect and restore beneficial submerged aquatic vegetation and oysters.

COASTAL & HEARTLAND NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP



Results and Benefits

Improved Water Quality:

A single oyster can filter as much as 50 gallons of water per day helping with both local, and overall water quality. This project resulted in the creation of oyster beds containing an estimated amount of 364,490 live oysters by the end of the first year!

Informed Decision Making:

This project provided scientists and resource managers with valuable information to determine which methods might be best for future oyster restoration projects. The results from this particular study concluded oyster bags to be the most successful method, followed by loose shell and oyster mats respectively.



Improved Habitat:

The restoration of this area resulted in an increase of one million individual macroinvertebrates representing 33 different species; indicative of an improving habitat. Along with this, water bird sightings nearly doubled after oyster bed installations.



Community Outreach:

This project could not have been completed without Citizen Scientist volunteers from schools, fishing clubs, and other community organizations contributing nearly 3,000 hours of their time. Through this project the general public were able to learn more about creating a healthy ecosystem and are more likely to get involved with similar projects in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to protect water and wildlife