



Why Recycle Oyster Shells?

Oysters are more than a seafood delicacy! They are **CRITICAL** to the health of our marshes and estuaries and provide the following important functions:

- **Food** -- No other habitat type is itself a commercial edible species and also serves as refuge and food for other commercial species. Oyster reefs do this and much more.
- **Filtering water** and removing particles and pollutants (adult oysters filter from 1-8 gallons of water per hour, improving water quality in the process)
- **Providing habitat** (oysters are a keystone species that build reefs, which provide habitat for fish, shrimp, crabs, and many other animals)
- **Controlling erosion** (oyster reefs are natural breakwaters that protect shorelines).

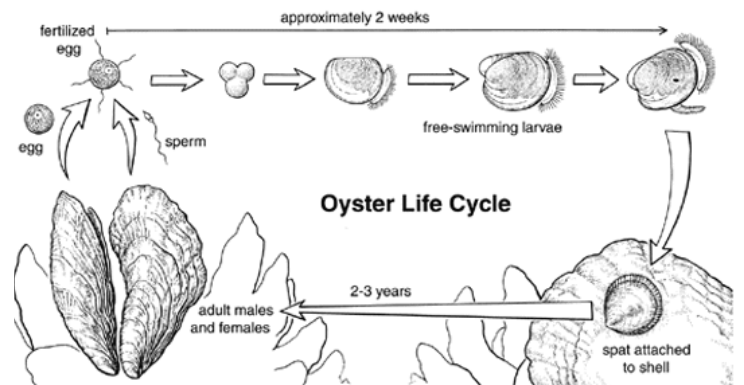
Oyster Bar



Oyster Life cycle:

Oyster larvae need shells to attach to. This helps rebuild reefs.

Adult oysters produce millions of fertilized eggs in the summer months. During their 2 to 3 weeks of development, larvae (young, free-swimming oysters) may be carried by currents long distances from where they were released. When larval development is near completion, the increasingly heavy larvae must attach to a hard substrate, ideally another oyster shell. If no suitable substrate exists, the oyster dies. Juvenile oysters (known as "spat") require two or more years to reach harvestable size, but they can begin reproducing within their first year, completing the cycle.



Permanent removal of oyster shells from reefs results in reef destruction, loss of habitat for animals, decreased water clarity, and fewer oysters.

HELP REBUILD OYSTER REEFS — RECYCLE SHELLS!!

